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**The [s(229) oma pneumatikon] and the redemption of creation : Christological
eschatology in Irenaeus perspective**

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**The σῶμα πνευματικόν and the redemption of creation -
Christological eschatology in Irenaeus perspective**

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PhD



ABSTRACT

In broadest terms, the thesis seeks to explore the systematic relationship between creation and redemption, particularly in the way it was conceived by the Patristic theologian Irenaeus of Lyons, in answer to the propensity within second century Gnosticism to crudely extrapolate one from the other. Rather than simply offering a historical exploration of the question, the study appraises Irenaeus' argument that Gnosticism forms the heart of *all* Christian heresies, describing in turn the prevalence and influence of common Gnostic themes in both contemporary theology and broader culture.

After appraising the Irenaeian charge of archetypal heresy, the thesis explores the methodology underpinning the bishop's refutation of Gnosticism, most particularly the way that creation and redemption are understood as mediated through the one Person of the Son. The study therefore explores the Christocentric nature of the project of creation, with reference to its purpose, the meaning of humanity and the place of Incarnation. It then discusses how the resurrection serves as paradigm of redemption and model of the intended new order. Exploring the Irenaeian teaching of Christ as both eternal and eschatological Man, it considers the nature of creation's transformation, conveyed specifically by the Pauline description of σῶμα πνευματικόν.

Having suggested the influence of Gnostic thought upon broader culture and the Church's common tendency to extrapolate creation from redemption, the thesis aims to present a fresh appraisal of the contemporary relevance of Irenaeian teaching, both for the task of detecting and discounting Gnostic premises, particularly in the areas of Christology and eschatology.

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|----------------|---|
| <i>ANF</i> | The Ante-Nicene Fathers |
| <i>ATR</i> | Anglican Theological Review |
| <i>CQR</i> | Church Quarterly Review |
| <i>CTJ</i> | Calvin Theological Journal |
| <i>EQ</i> | Evangelical Quarterly |
| <i>ERT</i> | Evangelical Review of Theology |
| <i>ET</i> | Expository Times |
| <i>FP</i> | Faith and Philosophy |
| <i>JTS</i> | Journal of Theological Studies |
| <i>NIDOTTE</i> | New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis |
| <i>NPNF</i> | Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers |
| <i>NTS</i> | New Testament Studies |
| <i>PE</i> | Pro Ecclesia |
| <i>RS</i> | Religious Studies |
| <i>SBET</i> | Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology |
| <i>SC</i> | Second Century |
| <i>SJOT</i> | Scottish Journal of Theology |
| <i>TB</i> | Tyndale Bulletin |
| <i>TS</i> | Theological Studies |
| <i>VC</i> | Vigiliae Christianae |

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The σῶμα πνευματικόν and the redemption of creation - Christological eschatology in Irenaeian perspective

Give to every reader of this book to know Thee, that Thou art God alone, to be strengthened in Thee, and to avoid every heretical, and godless, and impious doctrine.

(Against Heresies 3.6.4)

Introduction

To contemplate the Christian gospel is to engage in an awesome task. It is to consider the ἀρχή and τέλος, the origin and destiny, the past and future of all things. In theological terms, it requires us to evaluate the intricate relationship between *creation* and *redemption*. It is easy to find the plethora of theologies generated by the question both daunting and dispiriting. Yet this is scant justification for circumventing the debate. After all, the liaison between beginning and end, however conceived, forms the heart of Christian hope. The relation between creation and redemption takes centre stage in the Christian gospel.

Of course expounding the relation is always a precarious enterprise, attested on diverse occasions throughout church history. Yet the recurring tendency to extrapolate one from the other, to dichotomise protology from eschatology, finds peculiar home in much contemporary thought. Whether the focus falls exclusively upon ‘creation’ or ‘redemption’, the implicit division remains. Thus when science describes the universe as ‘a gigantic tug-of-war between the expansive force of the big bang, driving the galaxies apart, and the contractive force of gravity, pulling them together’,¹ the cosmic end is ultimate futility; creation is annihilated. Ironically such hopeless vision often coexists, however uncomfortably, with an anthropocentric ‘redemption’ whereby the call to save *our* planet disengages the world’s future from the tenets of *Christian* eschatological hope. Cosmic preservation is wrested from Divine hands, becoming instead the exclusive property of man. In Christoph Schwöbel’s memorable words, ‘it seems that the same absolutism of human action which has characterised the human exploitation of creation is now returning in the guise of rescuing it’.² But creation is also ruptured from redemption whenever the Christian future is expounded in a manner comprehensively detached

¹ J. Polkinghorne, *Science and Christian Belief*, London: SPCK, 1994, p162.

² C. Schwöbel ‘God, Creation and the Christian Community’ in *The Doctrine of Creation*, ed C. Gunton, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997, p150.

from the original world (that we might somehow ‘escape’ our unredeemable existence), prompting Feuerbach’s caricature, ‘Nature, the world, has no value, no interest for Christians. The Christian thinks only of himself and the salvation of his soul’.³ This (admittedly crude) misapprehension, whilst asserting the importance of humanity, severs the bond between ἄνθρωπος and κόσμος. Whenever attention is given exclusively to ‘creation’ or ‘redemption’, the implicit division between man and environment remains; ‘much current misuse of the creation, with its attendant ecological disasters, derives from a lack of realization of human community with the world’.⁴

This is not to insist upon a slavish parallelism between beginning and end. ‘Creation’ and ‘redemption’ cannot be synonymous, if redemption is to mean anything at all. Such an interchangeability of terms would deny a *purpose* to creation, collapsing any hope of progression and development. Fortunately Christian thought knows no such cosmic wheel, forever turning without meaning. Redemption implies a dynamic to creation, an emerging eschatology.

Within Church history, it is the thought-world of Gnosticism that articulates to alarming extreme this disjuncture between creation and redemption. Despite the subtle complexity and versatility of Gnostic thought, its under-girding premise drones an unmistakeably repetitious tune: material and spiritual, this world and the next, secular and sacred, forever persist as mismatched spheres of existence. For Gnosticism demands the complete abstraction of the spiritual deity from all creaturely life, to a point where even the likes of Celsus, Plotinus, Victorinus and Porphyry note the Gnostic disruption of cosmic harmony.⁵ Redemption is merely conceived as the spiritual deity liberating his own *from* the clutches of his inferior, subversive counterpart. Creation and redemption, domains of different gods, are literally worlds apart.

We recognise there is much debate at present on whether one should even speak of Gnosticism as a coherent movement.⁶ This study however concerns itself with the cluster of ideas commonly called ‘Gnosticism’, which the second century Patristic theologian Irenaeus wholeheartedly refutes in his defence of the Christian gospel. This cluster of ideas will be described as ‘Gnosticism’ throughout the present study, recognising that the historical debate

³ L. Feuerbach: *The Essence of Christianity*, trans G. Eliot, New York: Harper&Row, 1957, p287.

⁴ C. Gunton: ‘Trinity, Ontology and Anthropology’, in *Persons, Divine and Human*, ed Schwöbel & Gunton, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991, p60.

⁵ T. Torrance: *Divine Meaning – Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995, p36.

⁶ The 1966 Messina conference distinguished the broader term ‘Gnosis’ (elite knowledge of Divine mysteries) from ‘Gnosticism’ (particular groupings in the second century AD). Throughout this study however, ‘Gnosticism’ will serve as a term encompassing the whole spectrum of movements. For a good introductory exploration of Gnosticism, including the influence of Nag Hammadi, see C. Marksches: *Gnosis*, trans J. Bowden, London: T&T Clark, 2003.

surrounding the legitimacy of the term has no bearing on the systematic theological questions Irenaeus was confronting, at a time of advancing heresy and increased Imperial persecution.

Perhaps unsurprisingly such an Early Church theologian is frequently appealed to, in support of various theological positions, as caricatured by Hardy,

It is not unnatural that all claim him for their own – a Swedish bishop finds his teaching in harmony with that of Luther, a French Church historian speaks of him as a truly Catholic soul, and an English editor modestly observes that one could easily find in his writings all the articles of the Church of England.⁷

Yet despite the complexities of Irenaeus' interpretation, there is no denying his magisterial achievement of defending the *regula fidei* from the insidious teachings of Gnosticism,

His practical problem was the chameleon quality of gnosticism, which could assimilate philosophical theorems and polytheistic tendencies, so infiltrating the Christian community that Jewish and pagan critics made no distinction between Gnostics and Christians.⁸

Written between 182-88AD during Eleutherus' Roman episcopate, Irenaeus' *Refutation and Subversion of Knowledge falsely so-called* offers a thoroughly incisive deconstruction of Gnostic doctrine within the early Church,

La majeure partie de l'oeuvre irénéenne est consacrée à combattre l'hérésie et particulièrement la gnose, soit qu'il la refute directement soit qu'il s'efforce de contribuer à l'édification d'une foi solide, capable de résister à ses séductions.⁹

Commonly called *Against Heresies*, the five-volume work advances an impressively comprehensive Biblical theology. Book 1 exposes the Valentinian heresy,¹⁰ before its systematic dismemberment by means of rational proofs (Book 2), teaching from the Gospels (Book 3), sayings of Jesus (Book 4) and the letters of Paul (Book 5). Moreover the *ἐπιδήμις* *On the Apostolic Preaching*, true to its name, is a pocket dogmatics expounding the essential core of the apostolic faith, 'the very distillation of Irenaeus' thought'.¹¹ Both works confirm Irenaeus as one of the most creative, influential theologians of the Early Church. Brunner for one could offer no higher praise,

He was a systematic theologian of the first rank, indeed, the greatest systematic theologian: to perceive connections between truths, and to know which belongs to which. No other thinker was able to weld ideas together which others allowed to slip as he was able to do, not even Augustine or Athanasius.¹²

⁷ E.R.Hardy: 'Selections from the Work *Against Heresies*, by Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons', in *Library of Christian Classics*, vol 1, *Early Christian Fathers*, ed C.C.Richardson, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953, p344.

⁸ E.Osborn: *Irenaeus of Lyons*, Cambridge: University Press, 2001, p22.

⁹ A.Benoît: *Saint Irénée*, Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1960, p49.

¹⁰ 'I have laboured to...make clearly manifest the utterly ill-conditioned carcase of this miserable little fox', Irenaeus: *Against Heresies* in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers (ANF)*, volume 1, eds. Roberts & Donaldson, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996, 1.31.4, p358.

¹¹ I.MacKenzie: *Irenaeus's Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching*, trans J.A.Robinson, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002, p31.

¹² E.Brunner: *The Mediator*, trans O.Wyon, London: Lutterworth, 1934, p262.

Others too have characterized Irenaeus as the original systematician.¹³ His influence upon later Patristic theology is never in doubt; Schaff describes *Against Heresies* as the ‘polemic theological masterpiece of the ante-Nicene age’, whilst Aulén maintains ‘of all the fathers there is not one who is more thoroughly representative and typical, or who did more to fix the lines on which Christian thought was to move for centuries after his day’.¹⁴ Similarly Kelly sees Irenaeus’ doctrine of recapitulation underpin the later centuries of Patristic soteriology.¹⁵ If then it is true that Gnosticism’s thought-world brings violent estrangement between creation and redemption, and that this early theologian stoutly defends the Christian gospel from such teaching, it would be reasonable to assume that Irenaeus is well-placed to offer us instruction.

Hence the surprise to find Lyons’ bishop enduring such condescension in some quarters. Harnack for example sees in Irenaeus a hotchpotch of confused traditions, notably the Hellenic ‘realistic Gnosis’ and the moralistic Rationalism of the Apologists.¹⁶ Loofs denounces him as a poor theologian, lacking depth and clarity, who ultimately fails to harmonise his many borrowed sources, most particularly the work of Theophilus of Antioch; ‘Irenaeus ist als theologischer Schriftsteller viel kleiner gewesen, als man bisher annahm...noch kleiner wird Irenaeus als Theologe’.¹⁷ In fairness, Benoît accuses Loofs of presenting only a dissection of Irenaeus’ thought; ‘le tableau d’ensemble disparaît dans un amoncellement de pièces détachées’, though Benoît himself hardly advocates a discernibly united Irenaeus’ theology.¹⁸ Lawson too perceives marked deficiencies; ‘the actual work of S. Irenaeus contains only the raw materials for a profound theological system. The systematisation is something that has to be brought to him’.¹⁹ Similarly Minns blames Irenaeus’ ignorance for a supposed contradiction of his many sources.²⁰

Yet others, we have already seen, are far more complimentary. Meaning well, Bousset calls Irenaeus ‘the Schleiermacher of the second century’.²¹ Whilst Cullmann describes him as *the* theologian of antiquity, who truly understood the Greek mind, without succumbing to the metaphysical distinction between this world and the timeless Beyond,

It is also no accident...that among the theologians of the second century none fought Gnosticism with such acuteness as did Irenaeus, who with unyielding consistency carried through the time line of redemptive history from the Creation to the eschatological new creation.²²

¹³ Two such examples are V.Downing, ‘The Doctrine of Regeneration in the Second Century’, *ERT*, vol 14, 1990, p99 and R.Brown, ‘On the Necessary Imperfection of Creation: Irenaeus’ *Adversus Haereses* iv.38’, *SJOT* vol 28, 1975, p17.

¹⁴ P.Schaff: *History of the Christian Church*, vol 2, New York: 1912, p753. G.Aulén: *Christus Victor*, trans A.Hebert, London: SPCK, 1931, p32.

¹⁵ J.N.D.Kelly: *Early Christian Doctrines*, London: A&C Black, 1993, p376.

¹⁶ Brunner stoutly defends Irenaeus against the charges of Harnack and Ritschl: *Mediator*, p250-64.

¹⁷ F.Loofs: *Theophilus von Antiochien Adversus Marcionem*, Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1930, p432-3.

¹⁸ Benoît: *Saint Irénée*, p35, 153.

¹⁹ J.Lawson: *The Biblical Theology of Saint Irenaeus*, London: Epworth, 1948, p12.

²⁰ D.Minns: *Irenaeus*, London: G.Chapman, 1994, Preface x.

²¹ W.Bousset: *Kyrios Christos*, trans J.E.Steely, Nashville: Abingdon, 1970, p421.

²² O.Cullmann: *Christ and Time*, trans F.Filson, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1949, p56.

And Wingren, bucking the general trend, sees *Against Heresies* as a harmonious integrated work of Christological anthropology; 'for Irenaeus the central problem of theology is man and the becoming-man, or man and the Incarnation'.²³ J.A. Robinson, in his translation of the *Demonstration*, affirms the same; 'the wonder of Irenaeus is the largeness of his outlook...."The Making of Man"...is his constant theme'.²⁴ A newfound confidence in the harmony of his work means Irenaeus is no longer 'a servile compiler of borrowed materials, but a genuine theologian',²⁵ who certainly generates much renewed interest in the light of a revival in Gnostic studies.

If Gnosticism therefore preaches the inexorable dislocation of heaven and earth, where the material is the unfortunate outgrowth of a pre-temporal spiritual fall, redemption becomes invariably a dream of deliverance *from* this earth. Creation and redemption are at loggerheads. Irenaeus by contrast expounds a Christian salvation that *cannot* be estranged from a proper theology of *creation*; protology underscores his eschatological vision. The bishop knew redemption cannot be dissevered from creation (as was the Gnostic trend), but neither can it be dissolved into the first order, lest one depict eschatology as mere *restoration* to original perfection. The interplay of creation and redemption is far more nuanced. It was Irenaeus' deliberations over this question that helped formulate an emerging *regula fidei*, leaving Torrance to say,

It is particularly with Irenaeus in the middle of the second century that we find the most enlightening account of the Deposit of Faith in which he drew out the implications of the Apostolic and biblical teaching in the context of sustained refutation of Gnostic heresies.²⁶

We might therefore say dogmatics takes embryonic form in Irenaeus' work. In Farrow's words,

He is rightly regarded as the prototypical catholic theologian, an interpreter of the faith for his own troubled times who bequeathed to subsequent generations of Christians...a great store of theological resources, if not the discipline of church dogmatics *per se*.²⁷

For in considering this question, Irenaeus came to see that the project of creation could not simply be cyclical. Redemption must relate intimately to creation, but it cannot parallel the first order further down the time-line. The maturing project of creation, unravelled in redemption, must involve transformation.

If Gnosticism's radical contradistinction between this world and the next disentangles material creation from the future hope, the bishop of Lyons proposes a far more intimate relation, establishing in the organic unity between first and second order a connective point of reference.

²³ G.Wingren: *Man and the Incarnation*, trans R.McKenzie, Edinburgh: Oliver&Boyd, 1959, ix.

²⁴ Irenaeus: *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, trans. J.A.Robinson, London: SPCK, 1920, Preface vii.

²⁵ D.Balás: 'The use and interpretation of Paul in Irenaeus's five books *Adversus haereses*', *SC*, vol 9, 1992, p39.

²⁶ T.F.Torrance: 'The Deposit of Faith', *SJOT*, vol 36, Mar 1983, p1-28 [p4].

²⁷ D.Farrow: 'St Irenaeus of Lyons: the Church and the World,' *PE*, vol 4, no 3, 1995, p333-55 [p334].

Creation and redemption *are* connected, because the existence of both depends upon the mediating work of the same Agent: Jesus Christ, the Word of God. The goodness of the whole creation, both past and future, finds anchor in Christology. The Word upholds both Beginning and End. This is the bedrock of Irenaeian dogmatics, opening a perspective well captured by Nygren,

There can be no greater error...than to make a sharp distinction between Creation and Redemption, as if God had less to do with the former than the latter. *One and the same Divine love-will takes expression in both.* By the same Word by which He created the world, God has also saved the world.²⁸

In fact this profoundest of truths finds extraordinary expression when the Word Himself assumes flesh. As captured by Colin Gunton, ‘if God in His Son takes to Himself the reality of human flesh, then nothing created, and certainly nothing material, can be downgraded to unreality’.²⁹ If we are to understand redemption as the τέλος of creation’s intent, the incarnation (as indeed the resurrection) is requisite. For it is here that the Word made flesh becomes *literally* the point of continuity between ‘old’ and ‘new’. It is the Word *made flesh* whose life perfects the old order, whose death brings closure to that order, whose resurrection transforms the order, in a work that enables us with Irenaeus to see redemption as the perfecting of creation.

At a time when Church and culture are estranged from one-another, when perceptions of reality are hopelessly fragmented, when apparently intractable distance persists between ‘natural’ and ‘supernatural’, scientific maxims and the ‘miraculous’, ‘God’ and ‘world’, ‘spiritual’ and ‘physical’, ‘sacred’ and ‘secular’, we cannot easily overestimate the importance of Irenaeus’ Christological framework. To quote the words of Priestley, ‘evangelicals need Irenaeus’ help to broaden their perception of the meaning of salvation’.³⁰ Or to be reminded of Feuerbach’s charge,

It is beyond dispute that because of its tendency to individualism and a certain manicheism, the Western mind has long been concerned with how to get individual souls into heaven, rather than with how one becomes fully and finally united with the re-creation of both man and his *sitz-im-leben*, effected by the Divine Trinity in the New Adam, Jesus Christ.³¹

Irenaeus offers an escape from such polarizations. For he lifts our eyes to see the Christian gospel as the doctrine of the Son of God, pre-eminent in all things, who fulfils the Father’s will in creation and salvation. In His assumption of flesh He glorifies both God and man, Creator

²⁸ A.Nygren: *Agape and Eros*, trans P.Watson, London: SPCK, 1954, p396. Nygren later concludes ‘nowhere in the Early Church is the idea of Agape found in so pure a form as in Irenaeus’, p409.

²⁹ Gunton: *The Triune Creator*, Edinburgh: University Press, 1998, p52.

³⁰ D.T.Priestley, “Irenaeus speaks Swedish”: Gustaf Wingren’s Challenge to North American Evangelicals’, *CTJ*, vol 33, 1998, p125-41 [p125].

³¹ S.Rayburn: ‘Cosmic Transfiguration’, *CQR*, vol 168, 1967, p162-167 [p163].

and created. For ‘what other name is there...glorified among the Gentiles than that of our Lord, by whom the Father is glorified, and man also?’³² The cosmic project, indeed our daily existence, belongs to the One who holds creation and redemption together in Himself.

³² 4.17.6, p484.

CHAPTER 1: 'A MANY HEADED BEAST'

The Irenaeus Claim

Such are the opinions which prevail among these persons, by whom, like the Lernaean hydra, a many-headed beast has been generated from the school of Valentinus. (1.30.15)

To claim that Irenaeus speaks persuasively to *our* own day is to concur in great measure with his own conviction. For though the bishop's wrathful gaze falls upon the insidious teachings of a certain second century Valentinus, he perceives here a far broader field of vision. The Valentinians it would appear are quintessential Gnostics, but also archetypal heretics. Their teachings, like a monstrous hydra incessantly rearing its ugly heads, lurk surreptitiously behind broader human heresy. To refute Valentinianism is thus to wage war, at some level, against all heresy, as indicated by Irenaeus' choice of title to his work. This assumption that Gnosticism bears the hallmarks of broader heresy may prove no exaggeration. Certainly Gnostic teachers refuse to parade their colours openly. Deceit is craftily adorned in ever-changing garb, since teachers 'differ so widely among themselves both as respects doctrine and tradition...it is a difficult matter to describe all their opinions'.¹ Yet common doctrines do persist, with a flexibility that enables fraudulent assent to orthodox belief, 'such men are to outward appearance sheep; for they appear to be like us...but inwardly they are wolves'.² Their outward respectability masks 'the bitter and malignant poison of the serpent, the great author of apostasy'.³

Such diverse Gnostic teachings undoubtedly menaced the Early Church. Well-known teachers infiltrated Rome, such as Cerdon, his successor Marcion and Valentinus who taught for decades during the episcopates of Hyginus and Anicetus.⁴ The situation at the time was certainly fluid. According to Prestige, 'the Roman Church resembled less a system of parishes than a cluster of lecture-rooms',⁵ and scholarly consensus identifies the Gnostic pattern as largely *within* the Christian community. Few Gnostics remained outside the body of the Church, as the lines

¹ 1.21.5, p347.

² 3.16.8, p443, 1.8.1, 1.9.1, 1.9.4.

³ 1.27.4, p353, 2.31.3.

⁴ 3.4.3.

⁵ G.L.Prestige: *Fathers and Heretics*, London: SPCK, 1963, p27.

between orthodoxy and heresy were still being drawn.⁶ Valentinian Gnosticism could shelter among believers, because ‘the Valentinians regarded themselves as Christians’.⁷

The context helps explain why Irenaeus penned *Against Heresies*; precisely to shepherd his flock against this interminable threat, ‘labouring by every means in my power...that they may be in no way perverted by those who endeavour to teach them false doctrines, and lead them away from the truth’.⁸ Distinctions drawn between Christian orthodoxy and Gnostic teaching would also preserve the Church’s pure witness, lest ‘men hearing the things they speak, *and imagining we all are such as they*, may turn away their ears from the preaching of the truth’.⁹ Against our own day, when doctrinal rigour is considered almost extraneous to the task of evangelism, Irenaeus knew the Church’s universal witness would be sorely hampered by the tolerance of heresy. Nor does he forget the Gnostics’ own spiritual sickness. Exposing their poisonous teachings becomes his own heartfelt plea for their repentance and healing, in a persistent prayer that challenges our present age where all refutation of falsehood is invariably deemed ‘uncharitable’.

We do indeed pray that these men may not remain in the pit which they themselves have dug...and that they, being converted to the Church of God, may be lawfully begotten, and that Christ may be formed in them...We pray for these things on their behalf, *loving them better than they seem to love themselves*...Wherefore it shall not weary us, to endeavour with all our might to stretch out the hand unto them.¹⁰

Against Heresies therefore serves a threefold task; protecting the Church from within, preserving her true witness to Christ and calling Gnostics to find healing in Him.

We will soon consider more fully the Irenaeian charge against Gnosticism. But before we risk placing the proverbial cart before the horse, we should apprehend the tenets of Gnostic teaching, even as the bishop self-confessedly pursued an exploration of the poison, before prescribing godly medicine.¹¹ And turning to this matter, we are inevitably confronted with questions regarding Gnosticism’s origins.

⁶ P.J.Lee: *Against the Protestant Gnostics*, Oxford: University Press, 1987, xiv, p4. Bauer for one calls Basilides and Valentinus the first philosophers of Christian religion: *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971.

⁷ R.A.Norris: ‘Theology and Language in Irenaeus of Lyon’, *ATR*, vol 76, 1994, p285-95 [p286]. J.McCue also argues for Valentinianism’s development within Christian communities, ‘Orthodoxy and Heresy: Walter Bauer and the Valentinians’ in *VC*, vol 44, no 2, 1979, p118-30.

⁸ 5.Preface, p526.

⁹ 1.25.3, p351 [italics mine].

¹⁰ 3.25.7, p460 [italics mine], 1.16.3, 1.25.3, 2.11.2, 3.2.3, 4.41.4.

¹¹ ‘For it is impossible for anyone to heal the sick, if he has no knowledge of the disease of the patients’, 4.Pref.2, p462, 1.Pref.2.

Origins of Gnosticism

The Gnostic movement, we have implied, is a rather disparate and multifaceted juxtaposition of metaphysical themes, notoriously difficult to define.¹² In fact 'Gnosticism' offered no one structure against the orthodox faith, but acts as a collective term for several philosophical theories, as is clear from Irenaeus' account. Pétrement is thus right to say,

This name covers a large number of widely differing doctrines. It is modern scholars who speak of Gnosticism: the ancients spoke of Simonians, of Menandrians, of Saturnilians, of Basilideans, of Carpocratians, of Valentinians, of Marcionites, Ophites, and Sethians, to name a few.¹³

Yet we would be wrong to deny all connections between the many groups. Kelly captures the tension well,

To speak of Gnosticism as a movement is misleading, for that term suggests a concrete organization of church...on the other hand, it is clear that behind all the variegated Gnostic sects there lay a common stock of ideas.¹⁴

And this common stock, according to Firolamo, is the blend of Hellenistic syncretism and classical Platonism, producing a movement 'endowed with an internal principle and equipped with direction, coherence and autonomy'.¹⁵ In concerted attempts to explain the origins of evil, Gnostic sects radicalized the philosophical dualism which underpinned ancient cosmology, violently dissevering material from spiritual, temporal from eternal, to leave a world abandoned by a distant deity and susceptible to hostile demonic forces.¹⁶

Irenaeus however traces Gnostic ancestry to Simon Magus, the self-proclaimed redeemer figure and supposed originator of manifold heresies, mediated through his successor Menander.¹⁷ Consequently,

All those who in any way corrupt the truth, and injuriously affect the preaching of the Church, are the disciples and successors of Simon Magus of Samaria. Although they do not confess the name of their master, in order all the more to seduce others, yet they do teach his doctrines.¹⁸

This Gnostic movement certainly appealed to popular religion, amalgamating apocryphal Judaic teachings with strands of Platonic philosophy and the Oriental mystery cults that spread across

¹² See Introduction, p7, footnote 6.

¹³ S.Pétrement: *A Separate God. The Christian Origins of Gnosticism*, trans C.Harrison, NY: Harper Collins, 1990, p1-2. Also G.Bray: *Creeds, Councils and Christ*, Ross-shire: Mentor, 1997, p73.

¹⁴ Kelly: *Doctrines*, p26.

¹⁵ G.Firolamo: *A History of Gnosticism*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1992, p146.

¹⁶ Firolamo, xvii, p34-7.

¹⁷ 1.23.1-5, 2.9.2 [Acts 8:10], including Valentinianism in particular (3.Preface).

¹⁸ 1.27.4, p353, 2.Pref.1, 2.32.3.

the Graeco-Roman world in the first century BC. This amalgamation of Greek intellectualism with Eastern mysticism produced an intricate philosophical concoction. As Kelly argues,

It is...more satisfactory to regard Gnosticism as a movement or, more precisely, tendency which was wider and older than Christianity. The product of syncretism, it drew upon Jewish, pagan and Oriental sources.¹⁹

The German historical theologian von Harnack agrees,

Gnosticism is a manifestation of the great syncretic movement of the second and third centuries, which was occasioned by the interchange of national religions, by the contact of Orient and Occident, and by the influence of Greek philosophy upon religion in general.²⁰

Jonas highlights the syncretistic theme even more strongly,

The Gnostic systems compounded everything – oriental mythologies, astrological doctrines, Iranian theology, elements of Jewish tradition, whether biblical, rabbinical, or occult, Christian salvation-eschatology, Platonic terms and concepts. Syncretism attained in this period its greatest efficacy.²¹

But whether the movement is the ‘acute secularising or hellenizing of Christianity’²² as Harnack believed, or closer to a later Judaism as argued by the likes of Daniélou in the light of Nag Hammadi, its roots remain uncertain. This however need not concern us. Historical ambiguity seems entirely appropriate to a movement whose conception of ‘spirituality’ is so unremittingly a-historical. After all, Gnosticism ‘is not essentially a historic faith – in the sense of clinging to particular historic structures - by the very nature of the phenomenon, it defies ordinary historical study’.²³

This extensive syncretism spurs Irenaeus to unmask Gnosticism’s lack of originality. The Valentinians simply rework culturally established mythology, ‘sewing together...a motley garment out of a heap of miserable rags’.²⁴ Refashioning the thoughts of earlier philosophers,²⁵ they are mere products of their age,

Those things which are everywhere acted in the theatres by comedians with the clearest voices they transfer to their own system, teaching them undoubtedly through means of the same arguments, and merely changing the names.²⁶

Delighting in old mythologies, the Gnostics champion varied revelation, to which we now turn.

¹⁹ Kelly: *Doctrines*, p23.

²⁰ A.von Harnack: *Outlines of the History of Dogma*, trans E.Mitchell, Boston: Beacon, 1957.

²¹ H.Jonas: *The Gnostic Religion*, Boston: Beacon, 1958, p25.

²² Harnack: *History of Dogma*, trans N.Buchanan, NY: Dover, 1971, p227-8.

²³ Lee: *Gnostics*, p6.

²⁴ 2.14.2, p376.

²⁵ Most notably Democritus and Epicurus, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, Plato and the Pythagoreans, 2.14.2-6, 2.33.2.

²⁶ 2.14.1, p376.

Gnostic Revelation

In truth, any attempt to comprehend Gnostic revelation is a treacherous task. For in a world originating in acts of *unknowing*, revelation becomes an intensely personal self-orientated γνῶσις, promising the redemption of the inner man. Mankind's root problem is no longer hamartiology but epistemology, no longer sin but ignorance. Thus the Gnostic illumination of the true self brings 'salvation', in a solitary quest where the individual learns to appreciate his own divine life. Lee captures the sentiment to perfection, 'the Gnostic illumination enables persons not so much to see their own reflection in the being of God, as to see the being of God in their own reflection'.²⁷ For gnosis is ἐπίγνωσις, recognizing and returning to the 'self', Plato's revival of Delphi's 'know thyself', the redemption of the inner man.

Revelation, somewhat paradoxically, is thus essentially secretive, enigmatic, cryptic. Deep esoteric insights are not preserved in apostolic writings, but communicated orally to chosen individuals. 'Αποκάλυψις is exclusivist, captured in the single image of 'gold in mud'.²⁸ Only the 'spiritual' can penetrate the Pleroma beyond this creation; the rest of humanity remains in ignorance, 'the multitude...cannot understand these matters...only one out of a thousand'.²⁹ This elitist sentiment raises the Gnostic to self-authenticating spirituality, 'all who had received *gnosis*...had gone beyond the church's teaching and had transcended the authority of its hierarchy'.³⁰ Scripture is reinterpreted to concur with Gnostic assumptions,³¹ with the claim that many voices stand behind different texts. Prophets speak on behalf of different deities, seeking the glory of their own god. Even Christ is Teacher of both knowledge and ignorance, speaking in riddles, imparting error to those in error, revealing hidden truths only to the initiated few.³² With such an individualist conception of revelation, it is no surprise there is grave discordance within Gnostic opinion, as arrogant teachers jostle for positions of influence, unashamedly preaching themselves.³³

Irenaeus however has a very different understanding of Divine revelation, rooted in the trustworthiness of all Scripture and the faithful transmission of the apostolic gospel to the Church. Scripture is not hierarchically polyvalent; all its content is spiritual, 'the Scriptures are indeed perfect, since they were spoken by the Word of God and His Spirit'.³⁴ The Spirit-invested apostles received perfect knowledge of Christ; their fourfold testimony cannot be

²⁷ Lee: *Gnostics*, p27.

²⁸ W.Förster: *Gnosis*, trans. R.McL.Wilson, Oxford: Clarendon, 1972, p9.

²⁹ 1.24.6, p350.

³⁰ E.Pagels: *The Gnostic Gospels*, NY: Random House, 1979, p102.

³¹ Irenaeus mentions nonsensical examples of Valentinian eis-egesis: 1.8.2,5, 1.18.3-4, 3.14.4.

³² 1.7.3, 1.30.11, 3.5.1, 3.35.2.

³³ 1.11.5, 1.13.1, 1.14.1, 1.28.1, 3.2.1.

³⁴ 2.28.2, p399.

dismembered.³⁵ Though heretics appeal to texts, they fail to see the *unity* of the Divine witness, as prophets and apostles preach the same Christ. Thus Irenaeus assumes the task ‘of uncovering the intrinsic order embedded in the deposit of faith...bringing into clear focus the internal arrangement’.³⁶ This is the *regula fidei*, the apostolic foundation of the Church, which in contrast to Gnosticism is not secretive but public, not elitist but universal, not individualist but communal. It is the apostolic ‘tradition’, a public *delivering* (1Corinthians 15:3’s παραδίδωμι) of the true gospel to faithful men commissioned to shepherd the churches, who

Preserve this faith of ours in one God who created all things; and...increase that love...for the Son of God, who accomplished such marvellous dispensations for our sake: and...expound the Scriptures to us without danger, neither blaspheming God, nor dishonouring the patriarchs, nor despising the prophets.³⁷

Neither should we consider those appointed presbyters as lifeless custodians. The deposit of faith has ‘a continuously rejuvenating force’.³⁸ Through it, the Church becomes the seven-branched candlestick, bearing the Light of Christ, offering to the world the garden-fruit of Scripture.³⁹ The witness is public not cryptic, united not divided, self-consciously universal not elitist, captured in the image of creation’s greater light,

As the sun, that creature of God, is one and the same throughout the whole world, so also the preaching of the truth shineth everywhere, and enlightens all men that are willing to come to a knowledge of the truth.⁴⁰

To this faith Irenaeus calls us to hold unswervingly, and with excellent reason, as we shall soon see. For it espouses a theology of creation in starkest contrast to the despairing vision of Gnosticism.

Gnostic Creation

Having exhorted us to withstand the Valentinian hydra, Irenaeus now warns us of the irksomeness of its doctrines; ‘even to give account of them is a tedious affair, as thou seest’.⁴¹ This is nowhere truer than in the doctrine of creation. For Gnosticism conceived of God as archetypal Androgyne, whose volition is actualised in a series of hypostases called aeons. Together they constitute the fullness of the deity, the divine Pleroma that is the Absolute Transcendence Bythus (from Greek βάθος meaning ‘depth/greatness’). Each (male and female)

³⁵ So Marcionites and Ebionites must accept the apostolic authority of both Jerusalem and Paul: 3.13.1, 3.15.1.

³⁶ T.F.Torrance: *The Trinitarian Faith*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995, p33.

³⁷ 4.26.5, p498 [3.3.2-3 lists the line of Rome’s bishops, not as prelude to Roman Catholicism’s doctrine of succession, but rather to confirm the *public* nature of Christian ‘tradition’].

³⁸ Torrance: *Trinitarian Faith*, p286, 3.28.1.

³⁹ 5.20.1-2, 3.12.9, *Demonstration* §52.

⁴⁰ 1.10.2, p331.

⁴¹ 1.31.4, p358.

pair emanates in descending hierarchies of being, progressively revealing the Father, filling up Bythus' greatness 'as the fingers complete the hand'.⁴² This aeonic emanation may extend indeterminately,⁴³ in a Neo-Platonic chain generating ever-lower levels of life. We may therefore call the Gnostic project essentially *monist*, since the material creation becomes the nadir of a long ontological chain, where Bythus is distanced from the earth. In the words of Prestige, 'they produced so strong a sense of the remoteness of the real God that it became unthinkable for Him to be imagined as caring deeply about the bustle and drudgery of the human ant-heap'.⁴⁴

Instability among the aeons provokes a spiritual breakdown accounting for this evil world, as ignorance and degeneracy unfold within the emanation process; 'the imperfection and remoteness from God of each pair of Aeons, increasing step by step, explains how in the end the last Aeon could fall'.⁴⁵ It is 'Sophia' who breaks the Pleroma's androgynous harmony, her fall generating a formless work of ignorance, named Achamoth.⁴⁶ Expelled from the Pleroma yet retaining an 'odour of immortality',⁴⁷ Achamoth propagates this present place of tears. Matter thus originates in Sophia's ignorance and fear. Whenever this Gnostic scheme infiltrates the Christian Gospel,⁴⁸ the Pleroma's aeons blend harmoniously to produce a Redeemer figure, sent to restore unparalleled cosmic calm.

Imitating Sophia at lower levels of the ontological chain, Achamoth shapes three substances: material (hylic) from her passion, animal (psychic) from her yearning for the Pleroma, and spiritual from her essential nature. The demiurge fashioned from her ψυχή is lord of all things material and psychic.⁴⁹ Through him Achamoth transmits to unformed matter traces of the Pleroma, from which this world is generated as aborted cosmos, 'a distorted reflection of the harmonious beauty of the pleromatic world'.⁵⁰ Furnished to the Christian gospel this demiurge, abortive outcome of the abortive passion of Achamoth and Sophia, arrogant creator of psychic and material, becomes the Lord God; 'the God of the Jews, Creator of a cosmos threatened at its roots by incurable disease, is nothing but an unconscious puppet manipulated by the invisible strings of higher powers'.⁵¹ Here lies the Gnostic blasphemy Irenaeus repeatedly condemns.⁵²

⁴² 2.17.6, p382, 2.17.7, 1.1.1-3.

⁴³ Basilides for one posits 365 heavens (1.24.3). G.May: *Creatio ex Nihilo*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994, p66-75.

⁴⁴ Prestige: *Fathers*, p37.

⁴⁵ May: *Creatio*, p95, 2.17.9.

⁴⁶ Gnostics believed that in generation the male gives form, the female substance.

⁴⁷ 1.4.1, p320.

⁴⁸ 1.2.6. May claims 'the great and influential Gnostic theologians like Basilides and Valentinus wished consciously and decisively to be Christians' (*Creatio*, p41-3). Förster (*Gnosis*, vol 1, p127) and Osborn (*Irenaeus*, p154) agree.

⁴⁹ 1.5.1, his name 'Ialdabaoth' is usually interpreted 'son of chaos' (Förster: *Gnosis*, p85).

⁵⁰ Firolamo: *Gnosticism*, p74.

⁵¹ Firolamo: p83.

⁵² 2.6.3, 2.28.4.

The Platonic background to this picture is striking. The unbridgeable chasm between the spiritual world of intelligible Forms ('Being') and the visible tangible reality perceived by the senses ('Becoming') reappears, as does the eternal demiurgic Mind, who 'cannot simply copy or reduplicate the intelligible world in its perfection...he has rather to reproduce its rational order in a recalcitrant medium'.⁵³ Moreover Dale Martin depicts Greek cosmology as an interconnected hierarchy, precisely as the monist thread of Gnosticism appears to do; 'instead of an ontological dualism, we should think of a hierarchy of essence'.⁵⁴ This Gnostic picture leaves earthly creation no *inherent* value; the earth is 'a great allegory of the figures and events of the Pleroma',⁵⁵ retaining meaning only as rickety vehicle of heavenly truth. Farrow perceives this defective imitation as the core problem, 'the temporal exists, insofar as it does exist, only as a kind of *defection* from the eternal, the finite as a defection from the infinite, the creaturely as a defection from the divine'.⁵⁶ The terrestrial is the poor handiwork of an ignorant demiurge, who 'like an architect of no ability, or a boy receiving his first lesson, copied...from archetypes furnished by others'.⁵⁷ As in Plato's world the corporeal is not itself real, but is that through which the real appears, leading us to contemplate the pure archetype.⁵⁸ Bythus relates to the material only through intercessors, Sophia-Achamoth mediates uncomfortably between higher and lower, heavenly and earthly. The psychic creation, overrun by imperfections, only refracts spiritual realities in debased form. The demiurge inadvertently conveys the timeless Pleroma through times and seasons, presenting time as copy of spiritual timelessness. The human body becomes a microcosm of the thirty aeons.⁵⁹ Material existence, originating in Achamoth's ignorance and perplexity, speaks of cumbersome entrapment, burdening the spiritual from lofty ascent, as matter falls inexorably into corruption.⁶⁰ The Gnostic world is voraciously hostile and tyrannised by interminable conflict, as the demiurge ransacks Bythus' territory. Irenaeus rightly sees these Marcionite polytheistic currents 'unconsciously tak[e] away the intelligence and justice of both deities',⁶¹ leaving only an impotent householder and an opportunist pilferer.

Neither is this the only Gnostic contradiction. The emanation of aeons cannot easily explain the coexistence of Σιγή with Λόγος, nor the ironic foolishness of Wisdom itself (Σοφία)!⁶² The aeonic chain remains fundamentally arbitrary, pushing our gaze ever upwards (an Irenaeian parody counts 4,380 aeons, mirroring the hours in one year)!⁶³ Such conjecture is easily justified,

⁵³ R.A.Norris: *God and the World in Early Christian Theology*, London: A&C Black, 1966, p17. See §52, in A.E.Taylor: *A commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1928.

⁵⁴ D.B.Martin: *The Corinthian Body*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995, p15.

⁵⁵ May: *Creatio*, p114.

⁵⁶ Farrow: 'St Irenaeus', p335.

⁵⁷ 2.7.5, p367, 2.7.1.

⁵⁸ O.Cullmann: *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead?*, London: Epworth, 1958, p31.

⁵⁹ 1.17.2, 1.18.1.

⁶⁰ 2.24.6, 1.5.1, 1.30.2-3.

⁶¹ 3.25.2, p458, 2.4.2, 3.25.3, 4.33.2.

⁶² 2.12.5, 2.18.1.

⁶³ 'The operation must go on *ad infinitum*', 2.35.1, p412, 2.15.1-2.

The truth is that every number occurs with the utmost variety in the Scriptures, so that, should anyone desire it, he might form not only an Ogdoad...Decad and Duodecad, but any sort of number from the Scriptures, and then maintain that this was a type of the system of error devised by himself.⁶⁴

Most significantly, it is Gnostic attempts to refuse the Deity responsibility for evil that are irredeemably flawed. Bythus' self-disclosure via aeons is insolubly problematical; he is unproduced, they are produced, he incomprehensible, they seek to comprehend him, he without form, they have form, he impassible, they subject to passion.⁶⁵ Moreover when Gnosticism is acknowledged as essentially monist, defects within the aeons are inevitably charged to Bythus himself, as Irenaeus rightly perceives; 'they do moreover introduce defect and error within the Pleroma, and into the bosom of the Father'.⁶⁶ In such an ontological chain the distance between Bythus and the material creation can never abscond the Deity of responsibility, as Prestige also makes clear, 'if contact with creation be indeed degrading, the degradation is just as great when it is indirect as when it is immediate'.⁶⁷ The Gnostic deity, either unable or unwilling to prevent the commingling of temporal with eternal, corruptible with incorruptible, is consenting or crippled, approving or impotent.⁶⁸

This Gnostic world is created because of divine instability. It is not willed in love, nor declared good. Here is a most pessimistic cosmology, where evil resides in creaturely existence itself. It is a chilling world, marked by hierarchical chains of reality, imperfections of the material, imprisonment of physicality, yearning to return to eternal forms, illusion of the visible and inaccessibility of the invisible. Maintaining a radical disjuncture between creation and redemption, the vision offers earthly creation no future. It is a cosmology invoking despair.

Gnostic Man

Our briefest appraisal of Gnostic creation generates, unsurprisingly, a contradictory conception of man. This is not to deny humanity's importance in Gnostic systems, even as the Project of Man is central to Irenaeus. In this at least there is agreement. 'In the final analysis Gnosis is anthropology: man stands at the centre of Gnostic interests',⁶⁹ though he totters with uncertainty. For Gnostic man has *composite* origins. Composed of irreconcilable pneumatic, psychic and carnal elements, an inferior copy of the heavenly archetype Anthropos, he becomes the battleground between Achamoth and the demiurge, the locus of conflict between heaven and

⁶⁴ 2.24.3, p394, superbly illustrated in 2.24.4.

⁶⁵ 2.12.1.

⁶⁶ 2.4.3, p362, 2.13.6-7.

⁶⁷ G.Prestige: *God in Patristic Thought*, London: SPCK, 1952, p113.

⁶⁸ 2.5.3, 2.17.3-5,10.

⁶⁹ Firolamo: *Gnosticism*, p87.

earth,⁷⁰ as malevolent archons wrangle to destroy the divine seed, imprisoning man in a material body gripped by diverse passions. The theory attempts to explain the incongruities and afflictions of life, ‘a hierarchy of demons, servile and ready, is continually at work in everyone’s body, transformed into a remorseless inferno in miniature’.⁷¹ Valentinus, cited by Clement of Alexandria, thus construes the human body in terms of an inn, ‘for the latter has holes and ruts made in it, and is often filled with dung; men living filthily in it, and taking no care for the place as belonging to others’.⁷² Human conflict unmask an ongoing war between Achamoth and the demiurge, as man lives life within this cosmic disruption. The contest dominates Gnostic re-interpretations of the early Genesis narratives, where Scripture’s Lord becomes the psychic demiurge, pitched against both Achamoth and Christ, with mankind trapped uncomfortably in-between.⁷³

Such anthropology presents extreme disparities between body, soul and divine spirit. The divine seed is buried in matter, governed by demonically inspired passions. The material brings entrapment. The division of Adam into male and female further fetters the divine, as sexual generation keeps humanity blind to its destiny. The human body is a prison, a material state essentially detached from the true ἐγώ. Here are echoes of Plato’s world, where corporeality is a contaminating impediment to truth, a shell that traps the oyster, an obstacle to spiritual life to be renounced and despised.⁷⁴ It echoes too the celebrated σῶμα-σῆμα pun of Orphic cults, and the consequent transmigration of souls reincarnated in various bodies, likewise present in Plato,⁷⁵ and so foundational to Hindu thought.

Such a complex vision drones a constant tune, ‘the fate of the divine spark present in humanity and its fall into a hostile world of shadows, where it forgets its true home, while unconsciously longing to return there’.⁷⁶ In fact Gnostic cosmology and anthropology are intimately related, as we might expect. The tripartite division of Pleroma, the demiurge’s evil world and Sophia’s intermediate realm mirrors the tripartite anthropic division of pneumatic, hylic and psychic, since man is fashioned from every aspect of creation. The pneumatics are the Gnostics, awaiting salvation. The hylics, solely material, face perdition (Jews and Gentiles considered faithless). The psychic (Christians) lie uncomfortably in-between.

⁷⁰ 1.18.1, 1.24.1. Genesis 1:26 is reinterpreted as the archons speaking to one-another, A.Logan: *Gnostic Truth and Christian Heresy*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996, p168-9.

⁷¹ Firolamo: *Gnosticism*, p92.

⁷² Clement: *Stromata*, Book II.20, p370, in *ANF*, vol II, ed A.Roberts/J.Donaldson, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967.

⁷³ 1.30.7-10.

⁷⁴ Plato: *Phaedo*, 66B/C, 65C/D, 67A, 94E, 250C, in *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol 2, trans B.Jowett, p157-267, Oxford: Clarendon, 1892, *Cratylus*, 400C, 414A, in *Dialogues of Plato*, vol 1, p251-391.

⁷⁵ Plato: *Timaeus* 41D-42E, in *Dialogues*, vol 3, p339-517, *Phaedo* 249B, *Republic* 618A, in vol 3, p1-378.

⁷⁶ Firolamo: *Gnosticism*, p38.

Gnostic Redemption

‘There are as many schemes of “redemption” as there are teachers of these mystical opinions’.⁷⁷ Yet despite Irenaeus’ words, Gnosticism’s diverse strands always seem to interweave into the promise of deliverance *from* creation. Consequently, the Gnostic saviour is not the Jesus of Scripture. Flesh derived from ignorance and fear would defile him, for the material is fleeting, transitory and doomed to destruction. He simply restores particles of light from this dark world to their celestial home, by assuming a *non*-material body. Formed from the thirty Aeons’ harmonious contribution he embodies the entire Pleroma, assuming into himself diverse elements, that He might be the perfect cosmic paradigm.⁷⁸ A docetic Saviour, his psychic human body appears corporeal to deceive, assuming a vestment of flesh, ‘that he might come under the apprehension of man’s senses’.⁷⁹ Σάρξ is simply the assumption of a *visible* body as the Logos’ saving dispensation. There is no virgin conception, no inheritance of Adamic life; ‘Christ passed through Mary as water flows through a tube’.⁸⁰ The Logos never communes with human nature. There is no real connection to humanity, only a synthetic Spirit-Christ securing what Farrow calls ‘a wretched abortion of God’s anthropological project’.⁸¹

Once his years proclaim the thirty aeons, Jesus becomes the Gnostic redeemer, as the Christ-Spirit descends upon him in baptism, producing Jesus Christ.⁸² But this hybrid figure is racked by schizophrenia, as the aeons ‘Jesus’ and ‘Christ’ refuse to coalesce. The Gnostic vision is adoptionist, postulating an invisible Saviour behind the Man from Nazareth, as the enlightened miracle-performing Christ restores Pleromatic equilibrium. The man Jesus is merely the instrument of this Logos, a provisional receptacle for the aeon ‘Christ’ who, incapable of suffering, abandons Jesus before his arrest, trial and crucifixion. Some maintain Simon of Cyrene transfigured as Jesus is crucified on his behalf, others that Christ abandons Jesus crucified, only later to raise him.⁸³ Either way, Gnostic insistence that the ‘spiritual’ avoid crucifixion parallels Islam’s interpretation of Calvary. The testimony claims to bring freedom from the demiurge’s slavery,

Those who know these things have been freed from the principalities who formed the world; so that it is not incumbent on us to confess Him who was crucified, but him who came in the form of a man, and was *thought* to be crucified, and was called Jesus.⁸⁴

⁷⁷ 1.21.1, p345.

⁷⁸ 1.2.6, 1.3.5, 1.6.1. The Gnostic explanation for Colossians’ language of Christ ‘indwelling all things’.

⁷⁹ 1.15.2, p339. Saturninus describes him ‘without birth...body...figure, but...by supposition, a visible man’, 1.24.2, p348.

⁸⁰ 1.7.2, p325.

⁸¹ Farrow: *Ascension and Ecclesia*, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1999, p61.

⁸² 1.30.12, 3.10.3.

⁸³ 1.30.13.

⁸⁴ 1.24.4, p349. Conversely, those confessing ‘Christ crucified’ remain slaves of this world!

Such Christology denies the Son's incarnation, virgin conception, true humanity and authentic suffering, postulating instead a dichotomous composite Saviour, who redeems the spiritual by plundering another god's territory.⁸⁵ Creation and redemption remain diametrically opposed.

It is this spiritual γυνῶσις, an exclusive possession, which constitutes perfect redemption, because it secures release from a demiurgic world framed in ignorance. Or to quote Irenaeus, 'since both defect and passion flowed from ignorance, the whole substance of what was thus formed is destroyed by knowledge; and therefore knowledge is the redemption of the inner man'.⁸⁶ Gnosticism thus desires escape from everything except the self, 'the Gnostic escape is, in essence, a narcissistic escape'.⁸⁷ But tensions do remain between determinism and responsibility. On the one hand pneumatic, psychic and hylic obtain predetermined futures by their respective *nature*.⁸⁸ On the other, Gnostics secure extrication from this world through righteousness achieved *in the body*. Irenaeus exploits the inconsistency to full effect,

If souls would have perished unless they had been righteous, then righteousness must have *power to save the bodies also* (which the souls inhabited); for why should it not save them, since they, too, participated in righteousness?⁸⁹

Gnostics might claim salvation is not entirely automatic, as if the spiritual seed simply creates the capacity for salvation, if properly perfected on the world stage. But Irenaeus rightly exposes the tension. If the body performs acts of righteousness, flesh cannot be meaningless.

We have seen then Gnostic Man as a concoction of conflicting elements, presently enslaved in an evil material body, subject to passions and sexual division, under dominion of alien rulers, a battleground between divine and counterfeit spirits. 'Salvation' means *unscrambling* this tormenting condition, acknowledged amongst others by May; 'the goal of the salvation-process is the separation of what is mixed up'.⁹⁰ This hope is pivotal to Gnostic thought. The saviour comes not to reconcile man and God, but to reunite Gnostics with himself, re-establishing original plenitude. The *person* is unredeemed. There is merely the disentangling of matter, soul and spirit, a re-segregation of substances to their original place. Secret knowledge brings release from this demiurgic creation, always an escape *from*, but never a redemption *with* the world. The 'material' must necessarily perish, the 'spiritual' cannot undergo perishability. The chasm between substances remains.

Gnostic eschatology sees all traces of light ascend into incorruptibility. The spiritual seed, rescued from embodiment, are restored to a Pleroma where all opposition is overcome, ensuring

⁸⁵ 1.24.2, 1.25.1.

⁸⁶ 1.21.4, p346.

⁸⁷ Lee: *Gnostics*, p10.

⁸⁸ W.Löhr: 'Gnostic Determinism Reconsidered' in *VC*, vol 46, 1992, p381-90.

⁸⁹ 2.29.1, p402, italics mine.

⁹⁰ May: *Creatio*, p79.

the archetypal Androgyne returns to eternal repose. The demiurge enters the intermediate habitation, resting with righteous souls, whilst blazing fire destroys all matter. Here is the eternal re-segregation of disparate cosmic substances, an act of disentanglement, a cyclical salvation, a regressive yearning for a lost Pleroma, where τέλος recapitulates origin. But already we see Irenaeus unmask discrepancies in Gnostic aversions to the material. For the spiritual seed *requires* matter to attain perfection. Spiritual and material cannot be so easily dissevered.

The Archetypal Heresy

Irenaeus' depiction of Valentinianism as a many-headed hydra is undoubtedly evocative. And the title of the work, *Against Heresies*, certainly claims more than the dismemberment of several heads. But why does Irenaeus consider such teaching the *archetypal* heresy? The answer must lurk within the premises under-girding Gnostic theology. Only by deducing these will we apprehend Gnostic departures from the Christian Gospel, enabling us to discern more clearly the hydra's slithering presence in surprising places.

Distinguished theologians propound varied views on this question. Prestige believes Valentinus sought primarily to bridge perfection and corruption; 'the central object of this intellectual construction was to fabricate a moral and metaphysical bridge between infinite perfection and finite corruption'.⁹¹ In this sense, Gnosticism sought answers to the question of evil and its relation to human life and the heavenly world,⁹² attempting to resolve issues still central to contemporary metaphysical debate. Kelly by contrast typifies Gnosticism as a movement disparaging matter and history, with its consequent rejection of Incarnation,

The root incompatibility between Christianity and Gnosticism really lay, as second-century fathers like Irenaeus quickly perceived, in their different attitudes to the material order and the historical process. Because in general they disparaged matter and were disinterested in history, the Gnostics...were prevented from giving full value to the fundamental Christian doctrine of the incarnation of the Word.⁹³

On a related note, Cullmann sees the Gnostic problem as one of Docetism; both *the* great Christological heresy of ancient times and an ongoing menace to the foundations of Christian revelation.⁹⁴ It is Gnostic betrothal to Greek concepts of time, he argues, which explains the movement's disregard for redemptive history, and its espousal of a Docetic redemption that denies a historically future eschatology.⁹⁵ Moreover Cullmann rightly sets the Docetic heresy into its broadest context; 'Docetism...is branded already in the New Testament as the

⁹¹ Prestige: *Fathers*, p29.

⁹² Mary A.Donovan: *One Right Reading? A Guide to Irenaeus*, Minnesota: Glazier, 1997, p39.

⁹³ Kelly: *Doctrines*, p28.

⁹⁴ Cullmann: *Christ and Time*, p125-8.

⁹⁵ Cullmann, p56.

fundamental Christological heresy. Anyone who does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh belongs to the Antichrist (1John 4:2ff).⁹⁶ Whilst Farrow approaches the question from another angle, believing that Gnostic dualisms are driven essentially by a monist conviction. All plurality thus becomes the mark of unfortunate problematic division. This essential Hellenization of the gospel locates evil in ontology itself, and it is this that makes Gnosticism the archetypal heresy (along with the telltale abstraction of 'Jesus' from 'Christ' that leaves a schizophrenic redeemer-figure with no authentic humanity).⁹⁷ Despite these different emphases, one can trace a clear consensus; Gnosticism, in its attempts to understand suffering and evil, offers an essentially monist ontology characterised by disregard for the material and historical, generating in turn a Docetic redemption. Inasmuch as these traits are eminently repeatable, Gnosticism can be rightly called the 'archetypal' heresy.

Irenaeus certainly concurs with these modern theologians. Though Gnostic opinions are notoriously diverse, 'like mushrooms growing out of the ground',⁹⁸ yet in the midst of their disconcerting variety exists a calamitous departure from one foundational truth – the God who is Father, acting in communion with Son and Spirit, has willed the creation of the heavens *and* earth. He intended celestial and terrestrial, unseen and seen. The earth is not lightly cast aside. But if monism is the underlying Gnostic premise, there can be no Divine purpose to creation, no mighty 'let there be'. A monist deity could not will terrestrial creation nor open up its history, the earth is only disparaged as the unfortunate fruit of the monad's instability. And as monism forbids us to affirm the goodness of the heavens *and* the earth, it blends a poison colouring all other symptoms of the Gnostic disease. The goodness of matter and history will be regularly denied. Redeemer figures will require Docetic formulations. Salvation will be conceived as escape from corporeality. Hence the deity must be perpetually disengaged from a cosmos characterised by evil. Bythus is fundamentally unknowable, incomprehensible, inaccessible, self-consciously distanced from all pertaining to this earth, as Gnostic teachers 'cut off that creation with which we are connected from the Father'.⁹⁹ His transcendent aloofness requires the fashioning of a separate demiurge to account for this fallen world, conceding the origins of earthly creation to a pre-temporal spiritual fall.

Secondly, the unremitting monism of the Gnostic worldview can only construe *diversity as a menace not a kindness*. For diversity brings disintegration, as Bythus' articulation via emanating aeons generates spiritual fall. Added complexity, attributable to increasing remoteness from the one Source, brings accumulated evil. Sophia falls from Gnosis by

⁹⁶ Cullmann: *The Christology of the New Testament*, London: SCM, 1959, p324.

⁹⁷ Farrow: 'St Irenaeus', p336-7.

⁹⁸ 1.29.1, p353. Irenaeus lists the following sects: Marcosians and Simonians (1.23), Saturninus in Syria (1.24.1-2), Basilides in Alexandria (1.24.3-7), Carpocrates (1.25), Cerinthus (1.26.1), Ebionites (1.26.2), Nicolaitans (1.26.3), Cerdo (1.27.1), Marcion (1.27.2-4), Encratites (1.28), Ophites, Sethians (1.30) and Cainites (1.31).

⁹⁹ 2.31.1, p407.

degradation. Her abortive issue Achamoth suffers further degeneracy, before begetting the demiurge. Multiplicity speaks of conflict and disorder, not all-embracing beauty. In the background lies the Greek supposition consistently regarding particularity not as ontologically absolute, but as derivative.¹⁰⁰ A problematic multiplicity accompanies all monist conceptions of deity.

Thirdly, an earthly creation originating in spiritual fall has *no inherent worth*. It must acquire purpose by acting as cosmic mirror, partially reflecting, partially distorting heavenly reality. So light derives from Achamoth's happy memory of the spiritual light now forsaking her. She acts as Sophia's image at lower levels, even as the demiurge's angels imitate the thirty aeons. Outside the Pleroma nothing has *innate* value; it serves as poor reflection of another world in which Bythus, the Source of all life, dwells in blissful disengagement. Even the Gnostic saviour's πάσχα, echoing the spiritual Christ and the suffering Sophia, enacts the tragedies of another place.¹⁰¹ Nothing true happens on earth at all. A truncated redeemer becomes the escape-hatch to a world of shadows.

Most significantly, Gnosticism forbids any transformation of substance. Material, psychic and spiritual are distinct in origin and have no transforming relationship. Matter derives from Achamoth's passion, psychic from her conversion, spiritual from her union with Pleromatic angels. The psychic demiurge, blind to the spiritual, considers himself the only God. The spiritual infused into the psychic human soul is simply 'carried as in a womb in this material body'.¹⁰² The psychic and spiritual aeons 'Jesus' and 'Christ' cannot relate within the Gnostic saviour. The three substances coexist uncomfortably; a qualitative determinism correlates materiality with corruption, whilst gold remains uninjured by filth. The psychic appears more malleable, inclined to both spiritual and material, but no *change* of substance is possible. Redemption cannot involve transformation, since 'every one passes into a substance similar in nature to itself'. Even God is made 'the slave of this necessity, so that He cannot impart immortality to what is mortal, or bestow incorruption on what is corruptible'.¹⁰³

The Gnostic then presents a God enslaved to cosmic laws, powerless to dictate the operations of his world or to secure the redemption of the whole man,

Whatsoever all the heretics may have advanced with the utmost solemnity, they come to this at last, that they blaspheme the Creator, and disallow the salvation of God's workmanship, which the flesh truly is.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ J.D.Zizioulas: 'On Being a Person', ed Schwöbel/Gunton: *Persons*, p33-7.

¹⁰¹ 1.7.2, 1.8.2.

¹⁰² 1.5.6, p323.

¹⁰³ 2.14.4, p377, 1.6.1-2.

¹⁰⁴ 4.Pref.4, p463.

Here lies the archetypal heresy – an incomprehensible and impotent spiritual deity ‘protected’ from fallen creation, a blemished demiurgic creator and a material world determined by spiritual fall. Severed from the Father, creation is ransacked by a schizophrenic redeemer, who inaugurates an eschatology denying salvation to the flesh. The closing words of the *ἑπιδελξίς* admirably summarize such anti-Trinitarian teaching,

Either they despise the Father, or do not accept the Son – they speak against the economy of His incarnation – or they do not accept the Holy Spirit, that is, they despise prophecy. And we must be wary of all such and flee from their thought...if we truly wish to be pleasing to God and to obtain, from Him, salvation.¹⁰⁵

Creation is promised no future. The Irenaeus charge of archetypal heresy may not be as extravagant as might first appear. Indeed, we might say the claim is corroborated by history’s witness to Gnosticism’s ongoing influence upon the Church.

Gnostic Trends in Theology

The many-headed Hydra has perhaps seduced Christian theology in the absolute contrasts theologians sometimes draw at the boundaries of the one ontological chain. Three antitheses have found peculiarly fertile ground; the cosmological division between heavens and earth, the dualistic distinction between eternal and temporal and the anthropological divide of soul and body. For Gnostics interpret the heavens as supreme over the earth. Their origin, purpose and future overshadow material creation. Closely related is the question of time; eternity resides in the heavens, the place of changelessness and stability, whilst temporal succession marks an earth shackled to mobility, transience and decay, far removed from heavenly stasis. The dualism finds anthropological counterpart in the divide of soul and body, as the soul mirrors heavenly reality whilst the body belongs to the earth. Man is pictured as the microcosm of a confused creation, exemplifying a dualism with inevitable eschatological consequence.

The Heavens and Earth

This heaven/earth antithesis, extending Greek divisions of intelligible and sensible, Being and Becoming, leaves earthly life unreal; ‘the Gnostic is the Stranger par excellence, the “alien” propelled to exist in a cosmos that is strange to him, to live a life that does not belong to him, because it is rooted in illusion’.¹⁰⁶ The dualism extends to Christian theology whenever two-stage models of creation are espoused, where heavenly forms are fashioned eternally whilst

¹⁰⁵ Irenaeus: *On the Apostolic Preaching*, trans. J.Behr, NY: St Vladimir’s, 1997, §100, p101.

¹⁰⁶ Firolamo: *Gnosticism*, p13.

matter receives only temporal beginning. So Origen, attempting to guard human responsibility against Gnostic fatalism, explains inequalities of fortune in human experience by the fall of spiritual λογικά prior to earthly creation.¹⁰⁷ Earthly diversity symbolises defection from the divine monad. Norris highlights the Neo-Platonic tone of Origen's world,

In his eyes, the world is to be understood as the product of two 'movements': a descending movement in which being is diffused and diversified, and an ascending movement by which it is integrated again with its source.¹⁰⁸

The present world is thus pedagogical, a school for souls, qualifying fallen spirits to break corporeal fetters and return to the Divine. Materiality must be purged. Earthly creation knows no future.

Though often disguised by the subtlety of his thought, Gnostic disparity between heaven and earth also clouds Augustine's theological lens. Earthly life appears at times to resemble Plato's cave, where prisoners face an inner wall, seeing only shadows of truth cast behind them. There is a tendency to denigrate material creation, as when Augustine confesses 'out of nothing You made heaven and earth, two entities, one close to You, the other close to being nothing'.¹⁰⁹ Elsewhere Augustine describes *escaping* the corporeal to attain the Divine Presence, captured in the mother-son vision at Ostia; 'step by step we climbed *beyond all corporeal objects* and the heaven itself...we ascended even further by internal reflection and dialogue and wonder at Your works'.¹¹⁰ The material appears a suspect vehicle for communicating Divine knowledge (rendering problematical Augustine's conceptions of the Incarnation). Matter, inextricably tied to changeability, appears only dubiously real. Old Testament theophanies are reinterpreted as angelic mediation, preserving distance between God and world. Redemption is conveyed with Platonic soteriological imagery; a harbour, a fatherland, a journey elsewhere, a pilgrimage *from* this earth. Considering Augustine's colossal influence on the West, such elements have posited a theology of creation rarely conceived in all its diverse particularity.¹¹¹

Augustinian propensity to combine Christian theology with the Classical inheritance helped shape medieval scholasticism as synthesis of both. God was rather too often conceived apart from His temporal manifestation in the historical economy, extending Augustinian preference for a Christology centred on the *eternal* not incarnate Son. Aquinas' method, underpinned by a hierarchical emanationist chain, apprehends causality in vertical terms. According to Torrance, medievalism's transcendent Creator, rarely in spatial and temporal relation to His world,

¹⁰⁷ Origen: *De Principiis*, Bk 2 chap 1, 9.1, in *ANF*, vol IV, ed Roberts/Donaldson, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972.

¹⁰⁸ Norris: *God and World*, p126.

¹⁰⁹ Augustine: *Confessions*, trans H.Chadwick, Oxford: University Press, 1991, 12.vii.7, p249.

¹¹⁰ *Confessions*, 9.x.24, p171 [italics mine].

¹¹¹ C.E.Gunton: *The One, the Three and the Many*, Cambridge: University Press, 1998, p50.

reintroduces Aristotle's 'predominantly volumetric conception of space'.¹¹² A natural theology detached from actual relations with God became the dominant framework in which to interpret revelation. This theological tradition of detachment helped reinforce an epistemological dualism, fostered by both rationalist and empiricist camps. Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* exemplifies the trend, where a dichotomy between thinking and object leaves matter as simply 'extension', the filling of space, the non-thinking body a machine, a cosmic clock. Exercising its own rather Deistic detachment, theology tended to reinforce this scientific separation of God from the physical universe, reviving Bythus' enforced independence from earthly creation.

The distancing of God from creation sanctioned the somewhat mechanical universe of Newton, where space and time become infinite attributes of God, justifying Buckley's biting charge, 'what does the god of Newton actually amount to? Newton's god is actually the void divinised by the imagination, nature acting according to necessary laws'.¹¹³ And Newton paves the way for Kant, for whom space and time become categories generated by the mind to enable apprehension of experience. Such epistemology promotes scepticism, since the mind cannot access underlying reality, but it also promotes idealism, as the mind's re-ordering of knowledge condemns God to what might be called a convenient regulative abstraction, sustaining belief in cosmic unity.¹¹⁴ In the end deist seeds in Cartesianism, interpreted through men like Newton and Kant, produce a materialist cosmology grounded in practical atheism. Moltmann captures the process, 'Deism made God the far-off God. Atheism was the inevitable result; for the world machine must be able to function all by itself, even without God'.¹¹⁵

More than a century later, Brunner sees in the German Idealism of his day similar antitheses between nature and spirit, body and mind, knowledge and morality, which he rightly argues belong not to Christianity but to the Gnostic dislocation of heaven and earth, spiritual and physical, eternal and temporal. Ritschl and Harnack's 'rationalism' reformulate these themes. Whilst Böhme, the 'new Valentinus', espouses an updated Gnosticism whose impact upon Goethe, Hegel and Schelling enlivened Romanticism's search for the Absolute, beyond the confines of evil matter. In this light, German Idealism becomes what Brunner calls 'the "Greek" revolt against the "foolishness" of the Gospel'.¹¹⁶ Similar ideas resurface in Schleiermacher's subjectivist theology which, failing to maintain the radical hostility of God to evil, depicts humanity in 'higher' and 'lower' nature, whereby our 'God-consciousness' soars above our propensity to sin. This presupposes an anthropological division closer to Gnostic conceptions of redemption than to the teaching of Scripture.

¹¹² T.F.Torrance: *Space, Time and Incarnation*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997, p7, vi-vii, p2-5. The Church's essentially Aristotelian theory of the eternity of heavenly bodies fuelled attacks on Galileo (Gunton: *Triune Creator*, p113-4).

¹¹³ M.Buckley: *At the Origins of Modern Atheism*, New Haven: Yale, 1987, p319.

¹¹⁴ J.Loder & W.Neidhardt: *The Knight's Move*, Colorado Springs, Helmers&Howard, 1992, p24.

¹¹⁵ J.Moltmann: *God in Creation*, trans M.Kohl, London: SCM, 1985, p318.

¹¹⁶ Brunner: *Mediator*, p253, 264, 276.

Time and Eternity

Turning briefly to the question of time, we find that Gnosticism sought to place reality *beyond* the temporal, in timeless forms insusceptible to this transient world, echoing Plato's account of time as moving image of eternity.¹¹⁷ Salvation must abide *outside* of time. In contrast, Cullmann draws a deep distinction between biblical linear time (where salvation unravels as a continuous process of past-present-future) and its Greek cyclical counterpart. Eternity should not be set in contrast to time, but should be seen as *ongoing* time, 'thus in the New Testament field it is not time and eternity that stand opposed, but limited time and unlimited, endless time'.¹¹⁸ One should not think of temporality and timelessness, but rather of two temporal ages,

The fall into sin did not create the time category itself, but it involved in the power of evil the course of events that fills this age, while the course of events that fills the coming age is marked by the conquest of the evil powers.¹¹⁹

Scripture's time appears as an upward line towards redemption, whilst Hellenism offers only a circle, explaining the Ancient longing to *escape* time. Yet Cullmann accuses the Church of failing to distinguish Platonic conceptions of time from a biblical eternity understood as the unending duration of God's time.¹²⁰

Augustine for one is prone to this confusion, saying of God, 'because Your years do not fail, Your years are one Today'.¹²¹ Augustinian time marks change, in a creation where 'the unchangeable is preferable to the changeable'.¹²² God however lives 'in the sublimity of an eternity...always in the present...Your Today is eternity'.¹²³ Augustine's Time therefore risks synonymy with mortality, changeability with ἀμαρτία, as noticed for one by Moltmann; 'the fundamental distance between the time of created being and the eternal Being of God makes Augustine identify time with transience, and describe the time of created being as the time of death'.¹²⁴ At risk of confusing temporal with fallen, Augustine's time *necessarily* describes a disordered world. The Church consequently experiences little anticipated eschatology before Christ's παρουσία, as time remains unredeemed. Such eschatology is essentially dualistic, presenting two worlds, 'rather than seeking a realisation of the next in the materiality of the present'.¹²⁵ Salvation is largely relegated to post-temporal eschatology. The spatio-temporal order risks losing meaning, since past and future are primarily apprehended as mere extensions

¹¹⁷ Plato: *Timaeus*, 37d5.

¹¹⁸ Cullmann: *Christ and Time*, p46, 32-3.

¹¹⁹ Cullmann, p47.

¹²⁰ Cullmann, p51-5, 61-2. Interestingly, many contemporary biblicists have considered Cullmann rather too schematic.

¹²¹ Augustine: *Confessions*, 1.vi.10, p9 [Psalm 102:27].

¹²² *Confessions*, 7.xvii.23, p127.

¹²³ 11.xiii.16, p230.

¹²⁴ Moltmann: *Creation*, p118.

¹²⁵ C.Gunton: *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1977, p50.

of the human mind.¹²⁶ Even the first creation is considered something of an eternal act, its 'days' reinterpreted as symbols of perfection, allegorical 'ages' in world history, seven stages of spiritual life.¹²⁷ Daley's critique of the bishop does not appear unreasonable; 'the key to understanding Augustine's eschatological hope is to understand the sharp, metaphysically grounded distinction he draws between time and eternity'.¹²⁸

These traits within Augustine's doctrine of creation find echoes in Aquinas' Parmenidian ontology, where temporality becomes only a route to eternity, in a hierarchial order presenting God as changeless, abstract, timeless Absolute.¹²⁹ In fact the trajectory stretches to Kant, who with Augustinian nostalgia defines the spatio-temporal order as the extension of our mind's perceptions. And Kant, as Gunton helpfully points out, shares much with Plato,

The great difference between Kantian and Platonic ontology lies...in the tendency of the former to make the temporal order absolute and to deny the possibility of a knowledge of eternity. *But it is a difference within a shared set of presuppositions.* Kant's view of time is still dominated by the old Greek pessimism about its fleetingness.¹³⁰

Soul and Body

Regarding Gnostic trends in theological anthropology, we see the underlying Platonic conception of humanity as essentially *immaterial soul*, with its subsequent downgrading of bodily distinctions and sexuality, leaving earthly life straddling appearance and reality. Our bodies are dispensable, even problematic to personhood, as deity resides in the spirit. The tradition placing the *imago Dei* in the human soul certainly enjoys 'a tenacious hold on the human mind'.¹³¹ In this at least Origen is not untypical, 'that we hold the resemblance to God to be preserved in the reasonable soul, which is formed to virtue'.¹³² Similarly Augustine sees our inner soul as locus of truth because of its eternal quality, 'You live in dependence only on Yourself, and You never change, life of my soul'.¹³³ Consequently it is the human soul which acts as analogy for the triune God in His absolute oneness. Physical senses by contrast pattern transient disintegrating earthly existence, as the body remains the abode of sin.¹³⁴ Passions, considered ontologically inferior to the soul, are unknown to God, prompting Augustine's

¹²⁶ Augustine: *Confessions*, 11.xx-xxi.26-7.

¹²⁷ As with Philo, creation's days express order not temporal succession, *On the Creation of the cosmos according to Moses*, 13.18, trans D.Runia, Leiden: Brill, 2001. See Augustine: *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, trans. H.Bettenson, London: Penguin, 1984, Bk 11.30.

¹²⁸ B.E.Daley: *The Hope of the Early Church*, Cambridge: University Press, 1991, p131.

¹²⁹ Aquinas: *Summa Theologiae*, vol 3, *Knowing and Naming God*, trans H.McCabe, London: Blackfriars, 1964, 1a.13.11, p91-2.

¹³⁰ C.E.Gunton: *Yesterday and Today*, London: DLT, 1983, p107.

¹³¹ Gunton: *Triune Creator*, p47.

¹³² Origen: *Against Celsus*, Bk 7.66, p637, in *ANF*, vol IV, ed Roberts/Donaldson, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972.

¹³³ Augustine: *Confessions*, 3 vi.10, p42.

¹³⁴ Augustine: *City of God*, 8.8, *Confessions*: 4 viii.13, 12 xv.18.

words, 'God is described in Scripture as showing anger though in fact He is not troubled by any passion'.¹³⁵ Divine nature, itself changeless, is mirrored in the human soul.

The movement plots a course towards a non-relational individualist conception of personhood, typified in Boethius' description of man as *naturae rationalis individua substantia*. It paves the way for Descartes' quintessentially dualistic ontology, where mind and body partake of radically different realms of reality, prompting the words, 'it is certain that I...am entirely and truly distinct from my body, and may exist without it'.¹³⁶ Similarly Calvin, in Augustine's footsteps, presents rationality as the primary seat of the *imago*, where the mind/soul remains 'an immortal yet created essence...[man's] nobler part'.¹³⁷ Zizioulas' charge against Western culture is not without truth; rational individuality and psychological consciousness have determined our concept of man.¹³⁸ The Enlightenment's legacy thus propounds a non-relational theology of personhood, abolishing particularity and reducing human richness to common 'rationality'. It has lost the Divine intent for creation.

A Gnostic Renaissance

The Valentinian hydra is therefore not averse to donning fashionable garb. Contemporary paradoxes re-echo its polarisations, whenever Platonic forms are transferred into the Divine mind or heavenly beings are attributed divine status. Our culture's fascination with astrology, horoscopes and New Age mysticism leaves us chained to destiny and fate. There is no supreme benevolent Deity granting our freedom. Natural disaster documentaries present Mother Nature as a violent inimical power unleashed against humankind, a capricious concoction of forces pitched against us. And we ourselves, losing internal relations to this creation, champion a Cartesian disengagement of mind from world and body. Science-related ethics bring free-reign over a material world with which we are no longer deemed continuous. We toy with patterns and structures of the cosmos, expressing surprise at the repercussions. Genetic engineering brings us to the cusp of human cloning. Seeking to control the world in Manichean denial of its intrinsic goodness, we unleash forces threatening to destroy the earth. We inhabit a Gnostic-like universe hostile to human life, betraying a crisis in our own self-understanding, as Moltmann wisely perceives; 'what we call the environmental crisis is not merely a crisis in the

¹³⁵ *City of God*, 9.5, p350.

¹³⁶ R.Descartes: *A Discourse on Method, Meditations and Principles*, trans J.Veitch, London: Dent, Everyman's Library, 1978, Meditation VI, p132-3.

¹³⁷ J.Calvin: *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans/ed. by J.T.McNeill and F.L.Battles, 2 vols, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960, 1.15.2, p184, 1.17.12-13.

¹³⁸ J.Zizioulas: 'Human Capacity and Human Incapacity: A Theological Exploration of Personhood', *SJOT*, vol 28, 1975, p401-47 [p405-6].

natural environment of human beings. It is nothing less than a crisis in human beings themselves'.¹³⁹

Our attitude to time is similarly neurotic. Time is endured not enjoyed. A pathological inability to live in the present, and anxious confusion over past and future, feeds a hunger to escape spatio-temporal 'constraints'. Aspiring to a timeless reality set against this earthly order, we uphold an antithesis between time and eternity, which invariably presents Christ as the 'escape-hatch' from time, and redemption as the denial of all things temporal.¹⁴⁰

Nor does our age avoid disparaging the body. The Western Church, influenced at times more by Plato than Paul, portrays immortality as the endless survival of a substantial soul, not the resurrection of a spiritual body.¹⁴¹ Wolff sees Hellenistic philosophy regularly supplant holistic biblical anthropology, leaving our fundamental being alien to us.¹⁴² In fact contemporary life, with its unparalleled religious pluralism and brisk trade of faiths, resembles the religious flavour of Rome under which Gnosticism first flourished.¹⁴³ Current attitudes mirror Gnostic disparagement of the material, whenever reincarnation presents corporeality as an appendage to personhood. A similar spirituality is preached whenever the female body becomes a commodity. Even the modern desire to transcend one's gender, to refuse sexual definition, appeals implicitly to Gnostic ideals of a-sexuality.¹⁴⁴ Wainwright captures the paradox,

We live in a very sensate and sensualist society. We are in some ways absorbed in our senses, a people defined by materialism and sexuality. Yet in other ways we are curiously detached from our bodies, as though we were not really affected by what happens to us in our bodies or what we do in them.¹⁴⁵

This modern crisis of identity reflects the Gnostic dissolution of man into composite parts (lately expressed by the anonymous international trade in human organs). Spirit and matter are fractured; we are either alienated from our bodies or trapped inside them. Incessant appeals to the 'genetic excuse' present a biological determinism to rival the Gnostics themselves. Personhood must fulfil socially engineered criteria, preached by such ambivalences as 'quality of life'. Abortion, designer babies, cosmetic surgery and euthanasia unmask a culture in anthropological turmoil. Presenting freedom as irretrievably non-relational, modern doctrines fuel post-modern rejections of the self. 'Redemption' in all its contemporary guises pleads escape from every possible 'constraint' of earthly life.

¹³⁹ Moltmann: *Creation*, xi.

¹⁴⁰ Robert Jenson caricatures such a 'gospel' in *Alpha and Omega*, NY: Thomas Nelson&Sons, 1963, p14-16, 20-1.

¹⁴¹ M.Harris: *Raised Immortal*, London: Marshall Morgan&Scott, 1983, p2.

¹⁴² H.W.Wolff: *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974, p7.

¹⁴³ Firolamo: *Gnosticism*, xvii-xvix.

¹⁴⁴ See D.S.Bailey: *The Man-Woman Relation in Christian Thought*, London: Longmans, 1959, p276-8.

¹⁴⁵ G.Wainwright: *For our Salvation: Two Approaches to the Work of Christ*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1997, p18.

Nor in truth is the Church cocooned from such trends. Lee for one observes cardinal Gnostic heresies within mainstream American Evangelicalism, most notably ‘salvation’ by knowledge, a love of secret revelation and the radical individuality of the self.¹⁴⁶ Personal experience is regularly promoted over potentially divisive theological discussion,

Immediate experience rather than doctrinal belief continues to be central along all the religious movements. *Knowledge* in the sense of direct first-hand encounter has so much higher standing than abstract argument based on logic that one could almost speak of anti-intellectualism in many groups.¹⁴⁷

The acceptance of a narcissistic self-obsessed individualism leaves faith a private matter between the individual and his God; ‘what was being advocated, in the name of Protestant Christianity, was an ethic of unbridled individualism’.¹⁴⁸ In a Protean universe where doctrinal distinctions are lost, a Schleiermacher-ian Jesus serves only as ‘stimulator of the religious consciousness’.¹⁴⁹ A syncretism is thus introduced which reformulates Christian salvation in ‘secularized’ ways. Such Gnostic traits may be generalized, but they are not without validity. The same accusations, and no doubt many more, could similarly be levelled at the British scene.

Gnostic Shadows in Eschatology

It is now we can more readily appreciate the menace the hydra poses to Christian eschatology, where Gnosticism once again colours the assumptions of Church and world. For if creation is the unfortunate offshoot of a pre-temporal spiritual fall, the outcome of heavenly confusion and conflict, redemption is unavoidably conceived as *the destruction of matter*. Or in Irenaeus terms, the material ‘must of necessity perish, inasmuch as it is incapable of receiving any *afflatus* of incorruption’.¹⁵⁰ World history offers only the stage on which the spiritual seed attains perfection, while Gnostics await freedom from earthly matter. The picture effectively casts aside what God has fashioned, guaranteeing the earth’s destruction in a manner closely resembling modern philosophies of materialism and evolution, where forces of inherent necessity secure future annihilation. The bleak determinism in much contemporary science echoes the material hopelessness of Gnostic eschatology.

Secondly, Gnosticism’s immaterial hope *dissevers ethics from the body*. Filth cannot injure the gold. Deliverance from the creator demiurge leaves Gnostics ‘free in every respect to act as they please, having no-one to fear in anything’.¹⁵¹ At liberty to indulge fleshly nature, they

¹⁴⁶ Lee: *Gnostics*, vii.

¹⁴⁷ Lee, p113.

¹⁴⁸ Lee, p151, 142, 203.

¹⁴⁹ Lee, p211, 169-72.

¹⁵⁰ 1.6.1, p323.

¹⁵¹ 1.13.6, p335.

delude women in acts of sexual promiscuity.¹⁵² Some propound a reincarnation requiring misdeeds of the body, before the promised escape from corporeality; ‘they deem it necessary...that by means of transmigration from body to body, souls should have experience of every kind of life...and action’.¹⁵³ But Gnostic scorn of the material need not compel immoral living; certain spiritualities suppress bodily impulse, finding echoes in Christian asceticism,¹⁵⁴ since gender belongs to a creation the Gnostic transcends. But whether the response is bodily suppression or indulgence, evil is always located within matter *itself*. Similar views appear in contemporary blurring of sexual distinction, as if anthropology is shackled by gender. With sexual identification a matter of individual preference rather than Divine order, the prevalent ‘spiritualization of sexuality’¹⁵⁵ reworks these age-old themes.

Thirdly, Gnostic disparagement of creation *divests history of any real meaning*, since temporal ‘constraints’ belong to a world with no τέλος. The passage of time lacks purpose, leaving redemption necessarily conceived in *a-historical* terms. The Gnostic redeemer escapes historical definition. Indeed he threatens orthodox Christology, whenever the ‘Christ of faith’ is extrapolated from the historical ‘Jesus of Nazareth’, or the existential contemporaneous Christ is distanced from the objectively historical Jesus of Scripture. Such dichotomous Christological thought simply duplicates the Gnostic supposition.

Fourthly, the Gnostic need to escape the material *depreciates this realm of creation*. There may be verbal assent to orthodox faith, but the denial of this order remains. So Ratzinger claims,

By selecting a particular catena of biblical texts and combining it with a philosophy of time and eternity, the Valentinians were able to preserve the formula ‘the resurrection of the flesh’ and yet spiritualize totally the Christian hope.¹⁵⁶

True spirituality *must* despise earthly creation, for this order belongs to the demiurge. Redemption must be solely spiritual, ‘for they affirm that the inner and spiritual man is redeemed by means of knowledge...this then is the true redemption’.¹⁵⁷ This same longing to escape recurs whenever the Church, in Wolters’ words, ‘falls prey to that deep-rooted Gnostic tendency to depreciate one realm of creation (virtually all of society and culture) with respect to another, to dismiss the former as inherently inferior to the latter’.¹⁵⁸ Whenever the sacred/secular divide redefines the Kingdom as a monastic movement and ascetic ideal, a pietistic life of the inner soul, an ecclesiastical institution, a future millennium, we see at work

¹⁵² 1.6.2-4, 1.13.7, 1.28.2.

¹⁵³ 1.25.4, p351, 1.31.1-2, 2.32.2. This carte blanche to licence enjoys spiritual approbation; ‘an angel, they maintain, attends them in every one of their sinful and abominable actions, and urges them to venture on audacity and incur pollution’ [1.31.2, p358].

¹⁵⁴ 1.28.1. Interestingly, Bailey claims ‘although the Church condemned the dualists for their absolute rejection of matrimony, Christian thought upon sexual topics did not at all points conflict with that of Gnosticism’, *Man-w*, p42.

¹⁵⁵ Lee: *Gnostics*, p277.

¹⁵⁶ J.Ratzinger: *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, Washington: Catholic University of America, 1988, p174.

¹⁵⁷ 1.21.4, p346, 1.25.2, 2.17.11.

¹⁵⁸ Wolters: *Creation Regained*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2000, p54.

in the Church the constant temptation to live by a ‘two-realm theory that restricts the scope of Christ’s Lordship’.¹⁵⁹ Faith can easily become faith in a Marcion-like *Redeemer*-Christ, whose revelation pertains exclusively to the spirit, not the flesh, in sharp contrast to a liberal doctrine of creation founded on the theological premise that God is immanent in all things. Ironically one might think, though both theological positions appear entirely in contrast to one-another, Lee rightly discerns here a common assumption; ‘there remained in both camps a Gnostic separation of Creation from Redemption’.¹⁶⁰

Fifthly, Gnostic theology *refuses flesh a future*. Despite its subtle complexities, the movement radiates precisely from this core. Hence Irenaeus’ words, ‘whatsoever all the heretics may have advanced with the utmost solemnity, they come to this at last, that they...disallow the salvation of God’s workmanship, which the flesh truly is’.¹⁶¹ And to deny salvation to the flesh is to deny Divine power,

Those men...set aside the power of God...when they dwell upon the infirmity of the flesh, but do not take into consideration the power of Him who raises it up from the dead. For if He does not vivify what is mortal, and does not bring back the corruptible to incorruption, He is not a God of power.¹⁶²

It is precisely this denial of God’s power over life that marks Gnosticism as archetypal heresy. For flesh ‘is not destitute [of participation] in the constructive wisdom and power of God’,¹⁶³ as is abundantly clear from this *present* life. Once bodies are incapable of participating in life, the Creator has become the slave of necessity, fettered to the cosmos’ greater will. This is not the God of Scripture. Yet these faithless assumptions resurface whenever the soul is presumed *naturally* immortal (rather than dependent on the triune God), or the goal of Christian endeavour becomes one of eternal contemplation, even assimilation into God, as for example in Clement.¹⁶⁴ Such expectations lose sight of bodily redemption.

Finally, Gnosticism *denies eschatological progression*. Τέλος restores ἀρχή, in an essentially cyclical vision. The body perishes with the earth, the soul returns to the demiurge, the inner man enters the pleroma. There is no progression, only an undesirable temporal stage of material entrapment, from which the spiritual sparks eventually escape; an unfortunate delay, whiling away the hours inside a foreign country, awaiting the flight home. There is no evolvment of substance, only the eschatological disentanglement of matter, soul and spirit; ‘they declare that like will be gathered to like, spiritual things to spiritual, while material things continue among

¹⁵⁹ Wolters, p66.

¹⁶⁰ Lee: *Gnostics*, p93.

¹⁶¹ 4.Pref.4, p463, 5.2.2.

¹⁶² 5.3.2, p529.

¹⁶³ 5.3.3, p529.

¹⁶⁴ Clement: *Stromata* 7.3.13.1, 2.23.136.6, 6.14.109.5.

those that are material'.¹⁶⁵ Transformation is inconceivable. There is ἀποκατάστασις, a *restoration* of heavenly reality to its original state, but no progression. Whilst Christian eschatology has often advocated this course, Irenaeus leads us in quite a different direction. Having levelled his (not unreasonable) charges against Gnosticism, he begins to formulate a truer eschatology. How? By returning to the beginning.

¹⁶⁵ 2.29.1, p402, 1.21.5, 1.7.5.

CHAPTER 2: 'A PROJECT AWAITING COMPLETION'

The Father's Hands

The Splendour of Creation

There is one only God, the Creator...who is above every Principality, and Power, and Dominion, and Virtue: He is Father, He is God, He the Founder, He the Maker, He the Creator, who made those things by Himself, that is, through His Word and Wisdom – heaven and earth, and the seas, and all things that are in them. (2.30.9)

The previous chapter explored how Gnosticism's monist deity produced a dualistic degraded creation. Irenaeus in response announces the one Creator God as *triune*. A Trinitarian theology of creation, and indeed of the whole Divine economy, characterises the unity of his thought,¹ in a perspective inspiring Wingren's praise; 'in Irenaeus...the doctrine of Creation was built into the doctrine of Christ, the Gospel, the sacraments, and eschatology with unparalleled consistency'.² The Church father presents a God who, enjoying dynamic freedom within His own perichoretic life, unmasks the idolatrous monad Bythus, in a Trinitarian outlook determining Christian dogmatics in all its parts.³ He who needs no 'other' *chooses* to create, willing in love an earth and heaven without aberration. No longer is earthly life the unfortunate by-product of spiritual fall. Nor does this God relate to creation by proxy, since the Father, needing no distant mediators, fashions His handiwork through His 'hands', the Son and Spirit. Willed by His power and love, the cosmos acquires great honour. Creation becomes a project with purpose and meaning.

With none above or after Him, this God enjoys the freedom of His all-sufficient life. Undivided from all eternity He does not progressively unravel via emanating aeons, as if at variance with Himself. Uncreated, without beginning or end, lacking nothing in His own triune life, 'He is all thought, [all will, all mind, all light,] all eye, all ear, the one entire fountain of all good things'.⁴ To speculate on His activity before creation is to misunderstand His eternity, characterised by mutual love of Father and Son in the Spirit, 'before all creation, the Word glorified His Father, remaining in Him; and was Himself glorified by the Father, as He did Himself declare'.⁵ There is thus no *external* compulsion to create, 'God did not at all stand in need of man's love'.⁶ His

¹ Acknowledged by J.Fantino: *La théologie d'Irénée. Une approche trinitaire*, Paris: Cerf, 1994, p389-92.

² Wingren: *Creation and Gospel*, ed D.Jay, Toronto: Edwin Mellen, 1979, p6.

³ Concurring with Scripture's opening words, בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים, where God conveyed in Hebrew plural, performs a creating act expressed by a singular verb, a nuance rendered explicit in Genesis 1:26 and 3:22.

⁴ 1.12.2, p333, 2.13.3, 2.13.8-9, 3.8.3, 4.11.2.

⁵ 4.14.1 [recalls John 17:5], p478.

⁶ 4.16.4, p482, 4.16.3. We will later see how inter-trinitarian relationships shape the doctrine of creation.

all-sufficient interpersonal life brings *genuine* freedom, shattering the unremitting instability of Gnostic cosmology. It is this relatedness of Father, Son and Spirit, conferring particularity and freedom to a contingent creation, which counters what Coleridge called Phoenician pantheism and Hellenic eternity of matter.⁷ No cosmic power can negate His over-arching authority,

It is not seemly...to say of Him who is God over all, since He is free and independent, that He was a slave to necessity, or that anything takes place with His permission, yet against His desire; otherwise they will make necessity greater and more kingly than God.⁸

A contingent creation, willed by an all-powerful, all-loving relational God, has purpose.

We can therefore say that the truly free God engages freely in the task of creation. All things, visible and invisible, proceed from His gracious will. This is Irenaeus' conception of *ex nihilo*, where no wedge is driven between matter and form, as against a Platonic demiurge bringing *eternal* matter to heel; 'He Himself called into being the substance of His creation, when previously it had no existence'.⁹ This God dictates the *qualities* of things created, fashioning matter and form into a harmoniously consistent whole. There is no two-stage creation; both belong to the same Divine process, implied in Genesis 1:1's appeal to בָּרָא, ('to create/fashion'), and the narrative structure of 'forming' (days 1-3) and 'filling' (4-6). Here at least Polkinghorne concurs with the bishop,

To hold a doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* is to hold that all that is depends, now and always, on the freely exercised will of God. It is certainly not to believe that God started things off by manipulating a curious kind of stuff called 'nothing'.¹⁰

In this light, Scripture's language of 'formless void' (Genesis 1:2) denotes not so much the eternal presence of a reality called 'nothing', as the absence of God's controlling, ordering hand before the unleashing of the Word. So Dahl maintains,

The divine *fiat*, 'Let there be...' causes the universe to leap up out of the Void, suggesting that in all creation there is a tension, an equilibrium, between the attractive powers of the Void and the call of God's Word.¹¹

Neither should we understand *ex nihilo* as the expression of a Creator's freedom conceived *monistically*. When May suggests it was the 2nd century Church's exposition of *ex nihilo* that safeguarded Divine creativity against Gnostic determinism, he fails to perceive Irenaeus' *Trinitarian* conception of Divine freedom.¹² The eternal ἀγέννητος in *His own interpersonal life* is Source and Ground of all, 'the Former...Builder... Discoverer ...Creator...Lord of all; and

⁷ S.T.Coleridge: 'On the Prometheus of Aeschylus', *Complete Works*, ed W.G.Shedd, NY: Harper, 1853, vol IV, p353-60.

⁸ 2.5.4, p365.

⁹ 2.10.4, p370, 2.10.2, 4.38.3, contra *Timaeus* 28A-38A.

¹⁰ Polkinghorne: *Science*, p75.

¹¹ M.E.Dahl: *The Resurrection of the Body*, London: SCM, 1962, p67-8.

¹² May: *Creatio*, p25.

there is no-one beside Him, or above Him'.¹³ This is how Irenaeus underscores the essential duality of Creator and created, in both protology and eschatology. Things created cannot 'justly assume that appellation which belongs to the Creator',¹⁴ since they depend upon Him for their beginning. Neither Gnostics nor any other, powerless to fashion their own creation, can rise above their Maker.¹⁵ It is this triune God who freely commissions the project of creation. Gnostic mythologies precede the Genesis narrative with vast esoteric histories, consigning the earth to charges of aborted cosmos. But the bishop knows matter and form, God's possession and property, are 'good'. Both enjoy purpose within the Divine will.

If this raises the question 'how does God fashion His world?' the answer resides in the well-known image of the Father's two hands.¹⁶ Whilst Gnostics can only generate monist ontologies of division and disintegration, it is *the Son* and *the Spirit* who mediate the created order, revealing a God both transcendent and immanent, who 'should contain all things in His immensity, and should be contained by no-one'.¹⁷ For the God who is Love in His own interpersonal life is Love towards creation in His Son and Spirit. Requiring no angelic mediators, it 'is He who, by His Word and Spirit, makes, and disposes, and governs all things, and commands all things into existence'.¹⁸ He fashions creation *within* His own life, determining its shape and purpose. In the bishop's time-honoured words,

For God did not stand in need of these [beings] in order to the accomplishing of what *He had Himself determined with Himself* beforehand should be done, as if He did not possess His own hands. For with Him were always present the Word and Wisdom, the Son and the Spirit, by whom and in whom, freely and spontaneously, He made all things.¹⁹

Implicit here is the Father's 'priority' in the Divine life, as Son and Spirit minister by their mediation of creation; 'His *offspring* and His *similitude* do minister to Him in every respect...the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Word and Wisdom; whom all the angels serve, and to whom they are subject'.²⁰ The Father bears the creation and His own Word simultaneously, so the Word borne by the Father grants the Spirit, ensuring 'this God...is glorified by His Word, who is His Son...and by the Holy Spirit, who is the Wisdom of the Father'.²¹ This Irenaean image thus establishes an ongoing dynamism between God and world,

By using the phrase 'the hands of God', Irenaeus seeks to indicate...there is an intimate, immediate, continuing and unique interrelation of the Triune Being of the Creator as

¹³ 2.30.9, p406, *Demonstration* §4.

¹⁴ 3.8.3, p422, 2.34.2.

¹⁵ 4.19.2 (Isaiah 40:12, Ephesians 1:21), 2.30.2.

¹⁶ In a conscious rebuttal of Valentinianism, where right and left denote psychic and hylic (May: *Creatio*, p105).

¹⁷ 2.1.2, p359.

¹⁸ 1.22.1, p347, 2.2.4-5, 4.20.1.

¹⁹ 4.20.1, p488. Similarly Theophilus, speaking of the Spirit as Wisdom, was first to apply the term 'triad' to the Godhead (*ad Autol* 1.7, 2.15, 18).

²⁰ 4.7.4, p470.

²¹ *Demonstration* §10, p46, 5.8.12, p546 (Ephesians 4:6).

Father, Word and Spirit, and the created being of man, between the Uncreated and this particular creature, between...Maker and...made.²²

Here is a panentheist accord between Creator and created, which neither imperils the authentic freedom of the triune God nor of His created cosmos. Paul after all speaks of all things 'in Christ',²³ This God is both immanent and transcendent, containing yet uncontained, enclosing yet not enclosed, the great ἀγένητος lacking nothing, granting all things existence within His own abounding life. Creation is not unitarianly construed. The mediating Son and Spirit are Divine Persons *distinctively* engaged, guarding matter against co-eternity, establishing a Creator/created relation able to evade the dual pitfalls of pantheism and deism. Such mediation is an ongoing declaration of creation's goodness. Rather than Augustine's modalist tone, where God is perceived primarily as *substantia* not *personae*,²⁴ Irenaeus sees creation share within what Jenson calls 'the dramatic dialogue of the Trinity',²⁵ critiquing the whole Gnostic conception of reality as a descending set of emanating levels generating the Son.²⁶ The bishop however would not advocate Moltmann's panentheist *kenosis*, where 'only a withdrawal by God into Himself...can free the space into which God can act creatively',²⁷ in a contraction bringing a measure of Divine suffering. Here Moltmann (echoing the Gnostics) appears to postulate suffering as *intrinsic* to creation, thereby threatening the distinction between creation and fall.

This mediation of Son and Spirit ensures that all aspects of creation, unseen and seen, are 'good'.²⁸ There is no inexorable decline from spiritual to material, no earthly deformation of heavenly truth. Plurality and particularity are cherished, not stigmatised as a divergence from the Gnostic monad. 'Hylic', 'psychic' and 'spiritual' are not self-perpetuating substances originating in different deities, across unbridgeable chasms. They originate instead in the same God, 'all the things...mentioned, visible and invisible, have been made by one God'.²⁹ Neither heaven nor earth are eternal, all things created share one ontology, with no degrees of being. God's beauty streams through His entire creation. Physicality is no nadir of the ontic chain, no uncooperative decaying matter, a prison-like outpost for divine sparks of life. Eden is a well-watered garden planted by the Lord, and κόσμος conveys adornment and beautiful arrangement.³⁰ All creation is connected to the Father through His Word and Wisdom. Material is not subservient to spiritual, as all things receive 'a nature suitable to the character of life assigned to them'.³¹ Such intricate and diverse detail cannot be the distorted imitation of

²² MacKenzie: *Demonstration*, p101.

²³ Ephesians 1:9-10, Colossians 1:17.

²⁴ See Gunton: *Trinitarian Theology*, p42, 54.

²⁵ R.Jenson: 'Aspects of a Doctrine of Creation' in *Doctrine of Creation*, p27.

²⁶ R.W.Jenson: *The Triune Identity*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982, p69.

²⁷ Moltmann: *Creation*, p86.

²⁸ Genesis 1:4,10,12,18,21,25,31.

²⁹ 2.30.6, p405, 1.22.1.

³⁰ Genesis 2:8,10,15, Isaiah 51:3, Ezekiel 28:13, 31:8-9, 1Peter 3:3. Put simply, 'God does not make junk' (Wolters: *Creation*, p42).

³¹ 2.2.4, p361, 2.4.1, 2.25.1.

heavenly life as Gnostics suppose, which would only blaspheme the handiwork of Father and Son.³² Instead the cosmos sounds an intricately harmonious tune, and ‘those who listen to the melody...ought to praise and extol the artist’.³³

The Father, containing creation through the mediation of Son and Spirit, denounces both pantheist divinisation and deist self-sustenance. The world, neither eternal nor infinite, is fashioned according to an *original* plan, as the creative fiat is Divine ‘victory’ over darkness and chaos.³⁴ But creation is also *sustained* through the Son and Spirit. The Father’s hands are not withdrawn. In Mackenzie’s words, ‘the relation of creation...to God is not a relation of mechanical, impersonal dependence on an impersonal Creator, detached, unmoved and unaffected by His creative decree’.³⁵ It is no surprise that murderous bloodshed usurps the *Divine* prerogative, since blood belongs to the Lord not man.³⁶ Against an impotent passive Bythus who ‘exercises no providence at all’,³⁷ Irenaeus presents a God who *continues* His creative self-giving; granting breath, making the sun to rise, knowing the sparrow’s fall.³⁸ ‘Thus in becoming, being, and perishing, all creation is wholly dependent on the will of the Creator’.³⁹

Moreover under-girding this doctrine of *creatio continua* is the assumption not only of the fundamental *knowability* of the creation order, but of creation’s ongoing testimony to its Maker.⁴⁰ God after all has granted inherent dignity to this world, ‘since it is just such as the Father had...formed in counsel with Himself, it must be worthy of the Father’.⁴¹ So Irenaeus can say ‘even creation reveals Him who formed it...the very work made suggests Him who made it...the world manifests Him who ordered it’.⁴² Creation is the Creator’s property. The Imperial illustration conveys the point; as the Empire knows her Emperor rules from Rome, so ‘all beings fear the invocation of Him who created them’.⁴³ To refuse the Father’s benevolence is to incur judgement. We are creatures inescapably dependent upon our Creator God.

To neglect this Irenaeian conception of *continuing* Divine mediation is to slide somewhat precariously towards deism or pantheism. Without it Stoicism’s pantheist Deity, differentiated throughout the cosmos as λόγος σπερματικός, gains contemporary credence under the guise of

³² 2.7.3,6-7, 2.8.1.

³³ 2.25.2, p396.

³⁴ חֲדָרָהּ וְיִבְרָהּ (Genesis 1:2) reappears in contexts of Divine authority in judgment (Isaiah 34:11, Jeremiah 4:23).

³⁵ MacKenzie: *Demonstration*, p88.

³⁶ Genesis 9:4-6, Leviticus 17:14, Deuteronomy 12:23 (Wolff: *OT Anthropology*, p60-2).

³⁷ 3.24.2, p459.

³⁸ 4.2.1 (Isaiah 42:5), 2.22.2, 2.26.2-3, 3.25.4, 4.36.6, 5.22.2 (Psalms 33, 104, 139, Matthew 5:45, 10:29).

³⁹ Hoekema: *Created in God’s Image*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986, p5.

⁴⁰ Psalm 19:1-4, Job 38-41, Proverbs 8:22-30, Isaiah 28:23-9, Acts 14:17, Romans 1:18-20, 2:14-15 (Wolters: *Creation*, p29).

⁴¹ 2.3.2, p362.

⁴² 2.19.1, p369, 2.34.3 cites Psalm 148:5-6.

⁴³ 2.6.2, p365, 4.36.6 (Psalm 24:1), 3.25.4.

Spinoza, Hegel and Schleiermacher.⁴⁴ Whereas deist trends persist when Aquinas exchanges Word/Wisdom causality with Aristotle, sowing Enlightenment seeds of rationalism. Modern theology often pursues the trend, presenting a Newtonian mechanistic universe internally unrelated to God. Gunton captures the problem,

Ours tends to be a dualism from below, seeing the world as a closed and self-sufficient system with no possibility for or need of reference beyond it. This dualism is always near to a collapse into monism which makes the immanent the *only* real.⁴⁵

The same charge may be levelled at Process theology, where displaced Divine mediation leaves God 'little more than the one who validates human life as it is, a divine pat upon the human back'.⁴⁶ Similarly evolutionary materialism sees a world achieve its ends by *intrinsic* forces, as the modernist spirit loses critical dependence on the doctrine of creation. In Lee's words, 'a scientifically oriented generation has interposed its own archons: the big bang, probability, evolution, all of which provide some distance between God and this deficient cosmos'.⁴⁷ In Irenaeus comes a timely reminder that 'a pervasive spirit of metaphysical alienation must be confronted by a bold proclamation of the goodness and sovereignty of God the Creator'.⁴⁸

The God who wills and upholds the whole creation ordains a *broader* project. The cosmos is His purposive act. Creation has a τέλος. Though for Gnostics earth as broken image of the heavens enjoys no lasting honour, Irenaeus insists the material creation, sustained by the Divine will, is worthy of its Maker. Moreover this world enjoys a vocation, because the Father 'bestowed the faculty of increase on His own creation',⁴⁹ that is the distinguishing feature between cosmos and Creator, becoming and Being, maturing and Mature; 'God indeed makes, but man is made; and truly, He who makes is always the same; but that which is made must receive both beginning, and middle, and addition, and increase'.⁵⁰ Creation cannot move from first to new order, from protology to eschatology, without its Maker. Hence Irenaeus can say that 'in all things God has the pre-eminence, who alone is uncreated, the first of all things, and the primary cause of the existence of all, while all other things remain under God's subjection'.⁵¹ A neglect of Trinitarian mediation, with the subsequent risk of divorcing creation from the οἰκονομία of salvation, is a pitfall the bishop urges us to avoid.⁵²

⁴⁴ J.Baillie: *And the Life Everlasting*, London: OUP, 1934, p182-3.

⁴⁵ Gunton: *Yesterday*, p97.

⁴⁶ C.Gunton: 'The Knowledge of God according to Two Process Theologians: a Twentieth Century Gnosticism', in *RS*, 2, 1975, p95.

⁴⁷ Lee: *Gnostics*, p95-6.

⁴⁸ Lee, p221.

⁴⁹ 2.28.1, p398.

⁵⁰ 4.11.2, p474.

⁵¹ 4.38.3, p521.

⁵² A tendency colouring Augustine and Calvin's doctrine of Providence, though with notable exceptions (*Institutes* 1.13.14, 1.16.4 (Gunton: *One, Three, Many*, p55-67, *Triune Creator*, p155).

Gnosticism's world is the fruit of spiritual fall, a monist and pantheistic purposeless cosmos undistinguishable from its Maker. Irenaeus however propounds a far richer creation theology. Firstly, the creation project is good in its 'contingency'; God has freely willed creation in love. Secondly, Irenaeus refuses to downgrade materiality, by announcing it is God *Himself* who fashioned creation, as the mediating Son and Spirit enable creation to be itself, dependent upon the God who contains all things whilst remaining uncontained. Thirdly, Irenaeus shatters Gnosticism's hierarchical chain by proclaiming the goodness of this *particular* creation, prizing its diversity rather than depicting physicality as the pale distorted reflection of distant spiritual realities. All aspects of creation are accorded value; nothing is merely instrumental. Fourthly, the *sustaining* hands of Son and Spirit guard the creation from both pantheism and deism. Finally, apprehending creation as a Divine purposive act, the cosmos is given eschatological hope. Creation becomes a project awaiting completion.

Coherence in the Son

In the light of Irenaeus' doctrine of mediated creation, one can readily see shortcomings in the (predominantly post-Enlightenment) tendency to confine Christology to soteriology. Distancing creation from its Christological moorings, it leaves creation and redemption regularly dis severed. Gunton's generalized analysis is not without truth,

Much of Western theology has been able to operate with a highly abstract theology of the second Person of the Trinity, with the result that the New Testament linking of Jesus Christ and creation ceases to be determinative for the theology of creation.⁵³

Such views fall distinctly short of Irenaeus' teaching. For if Christology relates only to redemption, there is no coherence of the creation project in the Son. Mackintosh highlights the inevitable inconsistency,

We dare not permanently live in two mental worlds, dividing the mind hopelessly against itself. We cannot indulge one day the believing view of things, for which Christ is all in all, and the next a view of philosophy or science for which he is little or nothing or in any case ranks as quite subordinate and negligible. After all we have but one mind, which is at work both in our religion and our science; and if Christ is veritably supreme *for faith*, he is of necessity supreme altogether and everywhere.⁵⁴

The Word after all is He through and for whom all was created. As Mediator of both creation and redemption, Christ is the *Tóπος* of the Father's relation to the cosmos; creation and salvation come *through* Him. For the Son is 'Other' to the Father, giving rise to the great

⁵³ Gunton: *Doctrine of Creation*, p69. Buckley too claims 'the absence of any consideration of Christology is so pervasive...it becomes taken for granted' (*Atheism*, p33).

⁵⁴ H.R.Mackintosh, *The Person of Jesus Christ*, ed T.F.Torrance, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000, p50-1.

‘other’ that is creation, ‘to create in the Son means to create by the mediation of the One who is the way of God out into that which is not Himself’.⁵⁵ Distinct from the Father, it is He who mediates creation as one of two hands, and salvation as Λόγος ἑνσαρκος. Pannenberg similarly defines the personal distinction between Father and Son as the ontic basis for creation, the enabling of creaturely existence; ‘the Son is the primary Object of the Father’s love. In all the creatures to which He addresses His love He loves the Son’.⁵⁶ Creation thus derives from this Father-Son relation, because ‘God’s pleasure is first and foremost a pleasure in His Son’.⁵⁷ Though Irenaeus may not dwell significantly upon the love between Father and Son, such insights are certainly in keeping with his own Trinitarian outlook, in as much he conceives creation as a project willed by the Father to revolve and find its purpose in the Son. The Christocentric nature of the project communicates the eternal love characterizing the Father-Son relationship. Yet though Irenaeus espouses a *Christological* anthropology (as we shall see), he does not perceive Barth’s Word made flesh *in eternity* as the ontic basis of the Father’s love for creation.⁵⁸ Rather the Λόγος distinct from the Father as eternally Begotten is the Mediator of creation, to become Λόγος ἑνσαρκος, mediating salvation. Earthly creation is peculiarly His domain, ‘the sphere of His revealing presence’.⁵⁹ Irenaeus locates the doctrine of creation within the *eternal* Begetting-Begotten relationship of Father and Son, where the Son as Father’s ‘Other’ becomes the basis for the existence of all created reality. Athanasius would reiterate the argument against the Arians, who presented the Son as created mediator of the Father’s creative activity. Jenson captures the point memorably,

The Father’s love of the Son is, we have seen, the possibility of creation. Insofar as to be a creature is to be other than God, we may say that the Father’s love of the Son as other than himself is the possibility of creation’s otherness from God.⁶⁰

It is as the Father’s ‘face’ to the world that the Son has always been ‘the visible of the Father’,⁶¹ disclosing His glory to earth and heaven. So Irenaeus can say,

The Son, eternally coexisting with the Father, from of old, yea, from the beginning, always reveals the Father to Angels, Archangels, Powers, Virtues, and all to whom He wills that God should be revealed.⁶²

The Father’s will, ‘with regard to things both celestial and terrestrial’,⁶³ is made known in the actions of the Son, working things out in their proper time. His revelation as the Father’s visible ‘Other’ comes not only in the assumption of flesh, but ‘applies indifferently throughout

⁵⁵ Gunton: *Triune Creator*, p144.

⁵⁶ W.Pannenberg: *Systematic Theology*, trans G.Bromiley, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, vol 2:1994, p21.

⁵⁷ J.Piper: *The Pleasures of God*, Ross-shire: Focus, 1998, p24.

⁵⁸ K.Barth: *Church Dogmatics III.1, the Doctrine of Creation*, eds Bromiley & Torrance, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991, p55.

⁵⁹ MacKenzie: *Demonstration*, p95.

⁶⁰ R.Jenson: *Systematic Theology*, vol 2, *The Works of God*, Oxford: University Press, 1999, p48.

⁶¹ 4.6.6, p469.

⁶² 2.30.9, p405.

⁶³ 4.20.6, p489, 3.8.3 cites John 1:3, 3.16.7, Psalm 33:6-9, *Demonstration* §55.

all time. For the Son, being present with His own handiwork from the beginning, reveals the Father to all; to whom He wills, and when He wills, and as the Father wills'.⁶⁴ He is the *eternal* Christ of the Father, 'named "Christ", since through Him the Father anointed and adorned all things'.⁶⁵ The closing words of Cullmann's *Christology* explore this sacred relation, which

Is not, however, the distinction between Creator and Redeemer, but between Source and Goal on the one hand (ἐξ and εἰς: 1Cor 8:6) and the Mediator on the other hand (διὰ: 1Cor 8:6); between God and his Word, which as such is God himself, and yet is not God himself but 'with him' (John 1:1).⁶⁶

It is as the Father's 'Other', as Him who makes the Father known, that the Son is Agent of the cosmos. Irenaeus regularly returns to this foundational truth, that 'the Word is Lord and Author of all aspects of creation'.⁶⁷ Diverse Scriptures certainly preach creation's origin and coherence in Christ, invalidating the cosmological speculations of Gnostic opponents. John 1:1-3 self-consciously echoes Genesis 1:1 (ἐν ἀρχῇ repeats LXX of בְּרֵאשִׁית), as the Word the Source of Light and Life brings order and beauty to the emptiness. 1Corinthians 8:6, Colossians 1:16 and Hebrews 1:2-3 teach similarly.⁶⁸ It is this doctrine of Christ's cosmic mediation, so pivotal to Irenaeus thought, which enables a later Athanasius to deny Arius' assertion of the creaturehood of the Son, as well as Augustine to occasionally avoid the pitfalls of emanationism, and Calvin to see God's glory in creation shine forth in His Image, the Word.⁶⁹ Concurring with the Scriptures, Irenaeus thus apprehends *ex nihilo* Christologically; 'one God Almighty, who made all things by His Word...fashioned and formed, out of that which had no existence, all things which exist'.⁷⁰ All things, including our formation in the womb,⁷¹ receive their beginning through Him.

Nor is Christ only Agent of creation, He is also its model and blueprint. God has not simply created *through* Himself, He has taken the pattern for creation *from Himself*. The eternal Creator employed His own internal model for the project, 'taking from Himself the substance of the creatures [formed], and the pattern of things made, and the type of all the adornments in the world'.⁷² There was, after all, none other to take. Thus the cosmos coheres in Him who 'in an invisible manner contains all things created, and is inherent in the entire creation, since the

⁶⁴ 4.6.7, p469.

⁶⁵ *Demonstration* §53, p75, 4.36.4.

⁶⁶ Cullmann: *Christology*, p326.

⁶⁷ MacKenzie: *Demonstration*, p112.

⁶⁸ Colossians' Christology is particularly striking [1:15-20, 28, 2:6-10, 3:1-4].

⁶⁹ Athanasius: *To Serapion, Concerning the Death of Arius*, §2.2-4, Letter LIV, p564-6, in *NPNF*, 2nd series, ed P.Schaff & H.Wace, vol IV, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975. Also Augustine: *Confessions* 11.8.10, 12.7, *City* 11.32, *On Lit Genesis* 1.3, 3.6, Calvin *Institutes*, 1.13.7.

⁷⁰ 1.22.1, p347, 2.2.5 [Psalm 33:9, 148:5], 2.27.2, 3.10.1, *Demonstration* §43 [Genesis 1:1, Psalm 72:17, 110:3, John's Prologue], 4.32.1 [Genesis 1:3, Ephesians 4:5-6].

⁷¹ Jeremiah 1:5 (5.15.3), Deuteronomy 32:6 (4.31.2).

⁷² 4.20.1, p488. MacKenzie considers it better construed 'He taking *among* Himself' [*apud* following Harvey] (*Demonstration*, p83). The context in both readings speaks of internal Trinitarian relations.

Word of God governs and arranges all things'.⁷³ Athanasius too maintains with Irenaeus that creation speaks of Christ, 'but if through the Son it has come to be, and "in Him all things consist", it must follow that he who contemplates the creation rightly, is contemplating also the Word who framed it, and through Him begins to apprehend the Father'.⁷⁴ It is therefore in Christ that creation and incarnation interlock 'as two facets of the one act of the one God',⁷⁵ as the cosmos is structured around Him who assumes flesh. In this light, Scripture's opening word בְּרֵאשִׁית alludes beyond its temporal reference, to hint at creation cohering in Him who is the Head.⁷⁶ Christ the firstborn Heir will inherit His handiwork (Hebrews 1:2, Colossians 1:15, Ephesians 1:10), as the cosmos caught up into the Divine life becomes a gift from Father to Son.

Jesus Christ the ἀρχή is both Beginning and Head, the origin and sustenance of a cosmos mediated by and integrated in Him. But He is also creation's τέλος. The Divine intent for this good creation is eschatological perfection in Him.

Direction in the Spirit

It would however be wrong to see in Irenaeus only a binitarian vision of creation. The Father after all has two hands, mediating creation through Son *and* Spirit. The premise has prompted MacKenzie to argue that much Pneumatology post-Chalcedon has lacked Irenaeus' vibrancy.⁷⁷ We have mentioned the medieval tendency to displace the mediation of Word and Wisdom with forms of Aristotelian and Stoic *rationes*, leaving the Father 'transmogrified into a monistically conceived deity owing much to Greek negative theology'.⁷⁸ Consequently the Enlightenment brings an epistemological rejection of the transcendent, with its Unitarian immanent theology of a non-personal Spirit undistinguished from the world.⁷⁹ The trajectory continues through the theology of Hegel, which 'derives first from pneumatological immanentism – a tendency to *identify* the Spirit with the human agent',⁸⁰ concluding with Spinoza's pantheistic identification of God and nature. A neglect of the Spirit's mediation, and the consequent drift towards deism or pantheism, underlines the contemporary relevance of Irenaeus' triune perspective, whereby the irreducibly personal Spirit channels the love between Father and Son *outwards* in both creation and redemption. In Gunton's words, 'the Spirit is the Spirit of otherness in being the agent of the Son's movement out of the life of the Trinity to become the mediator of the

⁷³ 5.18.3, p546.

⁷⁴ Athanasius: *Four Discourses against the Arians*, I, chap 4.12, p312-3 [on Romans 1:20], in *NPNF*, 2nd series, vol IV, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975.

⁷⁵ MacKenzie: *Demonstration*, p32.

⁷⁶ Hebrew רִאשִׁית and Greek ἀρχή convey ideas both of temporal beginning and source/authority.

⁷⁷ MacKenzie: *Demonstration*, p83.

⁷⁸ Gunton: *Triune Creator*, p101-2.

⁷⁹ S.B.Ferguson: *The Holy Spirit*, 'Contours of Christian Theology', ed Bray, Illinois: IVP, 1996, p242.

⁸⁰ C.Gunton: *Intellect and Action*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000, p75.

Father's creating and redeeming action towards and in the world'.⁸¹ The Spirit thus effects creation alongside the Son; He is the 'Wisdom' of God disclosed in Proverbs 3:19-20, 8:22-5.⁸² Here is a far richer Pneumatology than Theophilus' image of the Spirit as metaphysical skin.⁸³ For unlike Theophilus, the Spirit in Irenaeus is a necessary second hand,⁸⁴ because of the dynamic *complementarity* in the Son and Spirit's mediation.

The Spirit then is eternal Wisdom, the life-force of creation, the transcendent power of God hovering over the deep, imparting life (Genesis 1:2). Ferguson describes רוח as the all-powerful energy of God in active engagement with the created order, 'the blast of God, the irresistible power by which he accomplishes his purposes, whether creative or destructive'.⁸⁵ Creaturely life and death depend upon Him,⁸⁶ since living things are flesh infused by רוח חיים, which both proceeds from and returns freely to the Lord.⁸⁷ He the Giver of life broods over history, sustaining the world in the Son. All creaturely life depends upon Him, who renews and transforms the created order.⁸⁸ Calvin echoes these Irenaeian themes,

It is the Spirit who, everywhere diffused, sustains all things, causes them to grow, and quickens them in heaven and in earth...transfusing into all things His energy, and breathing into them essence, life and movement, He is indeed plainly Divine.⁸⁹

For the Spirit grants order, form and beauty to creation, illuminating the heavens with the knowledge of God, 'the same God who made all things by the Word ...adorned them by [His] Wisdom'.⁹⁰ He is the seven-branched candlestick pointing Israel to the light of Christ. According to the Father's will, He 'was from the beginning, in all the dispensations of God, present with mankind, and announced things future, revealed things present, and narrated things past'.⁹¹ Indeed the Spirit affirms the *particularity* of creation, enabling created things to be distinctly themselves through the Son, against all modalist pantheism that leaves creation as God's self-externalization in time. Creation is 'perfected' precisely with its distinctions affirmed, as the Spirit 'brings the activity of the Father and the Son to its goal'.⁹² Basil too defines the Spirit as perfecting Cause,

In the creation bethink thee first...of the original cause of all things that are made, the Father; of the creative cause, the Son; of the perfecting cause, the Spirit; so that the

⁸¹ Gunton: *Intellect*, p80.

⁸² Alongside Athenagoras but contra most fathers, Irenaeus interprets these verses Pneumatologically (4.20.3).

⁸³ Theophilus: *Ad Autol* 1.5. See Robinson's introduction to *Demonstration*, p57.

⁸⁴ Argued by P.Cumin: 'Irenaeus, Gnostic monism, and the strong second hand of God', *King's Postgraduate Systematic Theology Seminar*, London: June 2002. The imagery appears in 4.Pref.4, 5.1.3, 5.5.1, 5.6.1, 5.28.4.

⁸⁵ Ferguson: *Holy Spirit*, p17.

⁸⁶ Argued persuasively in Wolff: *Anthropology*, p32-9.

⁸⁷ Genesis 6:17, 7:15,22, Job 34:14, Psalm 104:29, Psalm 146:4, Ecclesiastes 12:7.

⁸⁸ Psalm 104:29-30, Ezekiel 37:1-10.

⁸⁹ Calvin: *Institutes* 1.13.14, p138.

⁹⁰ 4.20.2, p488. MacKenzie suggests Irenaeus links cosmos and κοσμεῖν ['to arrange/adorn'] (*Demonstration*, p81).

⁹¹ 4.33.1, p506, 4.33.7.

⁹² Moltmann: *Creation*, p9.



ministering spirits subsist by the will of the Father, are brought into being by the operation of the Son, and perfected by the presence of the Spirit.⁹³

This perfecting of creation is the *affirmation* of material existence, the τέλος of an ongoing dynamic between the Spirit and flesh. Spiritual and material are not irreconcilable. On the contrary, it is the Spirit who, grieved by Samson's corporeal sin, 'puts us more decisively into the body'.⁹⁴ It is He who secures freedom for the material, bringing to pass the eschatological goal of likeness of God.

For the Spirit is the Source of eschatological life, overcoming death and futility, moving creation in Christ from formlessness and void to forming and filling. If earthly creation, using Wolters' image, is a child struck with illness, the Spirit secures an increasing maturation and healing, countering creation's ongoing sickness.⁹⁵ For He is the Giver of true human freedom, implicit in Jesus' Johannine promise and Paul's account of life in Him.⁹⁶ Gnostic deities are powerless to transgress hyllic, animal and spiritual boundaries, but the Spirit heals divisions between mind and matter, securing transformation of the body. Enabling creation to flourish, He directs the world to its true End in Christ, patterned in the events of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21), 'the distinctive work of the Spirit is, through Christ, to perfect the creation'.⁹⁷ Irenaeus depicts Him as water from heaven, the dew of God irrigating and nourishing a barren earth,

A cutting from the vine planted in the ground fructifies in its season...a corn of wheat falling into the earth and becoming decomposed, rises with manifold increase by the Spirit of God, who contains all things.⁹⁸

And He who feeds the earth renders our own lives fruitful to God, 'as dry earth does not bring forth unless it receive moisture, in like manner we also, being originally a dry tree, could never have brought forth fruit unto life without the voluntary rain from above'.⁹⁹ So it is the Spirit, Irenaeus maintains, who acts in all dispensations of the one οἰκονομία in Christ,

The Holy Spirit, through whom the prophets prophesied and the patriarchs learnt the things of God and the righteous were led in the paths of righteousness...in the last times was poured out in a new fashion upon the human race renewing man, throughout the world, to God.¹⁰⁰

Creation's τέλος thus *requires* the Spirit, whose uniting of all things into Christ accomplishes a project of maturing purposed from the beginning. The victory of God over chaos finds its end in the Spirit as Source of eschatological life, enabling O'Donovan to say,

⁹³ Basil of Caesarea: *On The Holy Spirit*, §16.38, p23, in *NPNF*, 2nd series, vol VIII, ed Schaff/Wace, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975.

⁹⁴ Fragment XLI, expounding 1Corinthians 3:16-17.

⁹⁵ Wolters: *Creation*, p39-40.

⁹⁶ John 8:32,36, Galatians 3:2-3, 5:13,16-18,22-5.

⁹⁷ Gunton: *Christ and Creation*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992, p50.

⁹⁸ 5.2.3, p528.

⁹⁹ 3.17.2, p445, 5.2.3, 3.17.3.

¹⁰⁰ *Demonstration* §6, p44.

The eschatological transformation of the world is neither the mere repetition of the created order nor its negation. It is its fulfillment, its *telos*. It is the historical *telos* of the origin, that which creation is intended *for*, and that which it points and strives *towards*.¹⁰¹

In summary, Irenaeus' Christological and Pneumatological structuring of creation secures the Father's continual involvement in His world, enabling anticipations of its final perfection by the Spirit. Without the Father's 'hands', the project of creation lacks both ongoing purpose and teleological hope. In creation this God of love, relating perichoretically through reciprocal giving and receiving, opens His life to others. In Jenson's words, 'for God to create is for Him to open a place in His triune life for others than the three whose mutual life He is'.¹⁰² The Christocentric heart of the project, as conceived by Irenaeus, confirms this as the Divine intent. And created reality becomes itself perichoretic, the handiwork of a relational God, enjoying eschatological hope through the Spirit. The insight supports Barth's assertion that the doctrine of creation is no forecourt into the temple of faith, but is itself a response to revelation.¹⁰³

The Father originates the project, 'establishing all things by His Word and binding them together by His Wisdom'.¹⁰⁴ The Word gives body, the reality of being. The Spirit gives order and form to the diversity. Here is the Irenaeian pattern; Father commands, Son forms, Spirit nurtures, 'the Father planning everything well and giving His commands, the Son carrying these into execution and performing the work of creating, and the Spirit nourishing and increasing [what is made]'.¹⁰⁵ The Trinitarian perspective is crucial. It frees creation from the twin scourges of deism and pantheism. It affirms the goodness of materiality. It establishes ongoing relation between Creator and created. It introduces dynamic purpose to the creation project. Moreover it avoids Patromonist formulations of creation and Christomonist soteriology, modelling a triune appreciation to all Divine action, the patristic *opera Trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*.

Divine action, however differentiated in human conception, always begins from the Father, proceeds through His Son, and is completed in the Holy Spirit; there is no such thing as a separate, individual operation of any Person.¹⁰⁶

And in this God we find a fertile relation between first order and last, creation and redemption.

¹⁰¹ O'Donovan: *Resurrection and Moral Order*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986, p55.

¹⁰² Jenson: *Doctrine of Creation*, p25.

¹⁰³ Barth: *Dogmatics in Outline*, trans G.Thomson, 1949, London: SCM, 1958, p50.

¹⁰⁴ 3.24.2, p459.

¹⁰⁵ 4.38.3, p522, *Demonstration* §5.

¹⁰⁶ Prestige: *Patristic Thought*, p260.

The Formation of Adam

For the Lord, taking dust from the earth, moulded man; and it was upon his behalf that all the dispensation of the Lord's advent took place. (5.14.2)

The Man of Dust

If Gnosticism preached interminable anthropological discord between material, psychic and spiritual, Irenaeus presents Adam as a harmonious whole, fashioned from creation itself and enlivened by Divine Breath. Blending together dust and life-breath, God produces a man both continuous with the cosmos and according to the Divine Image. What is more, material creation is the Lord's *chosen* environment for the man He has made (Genesis 2:8). Earthly life is more than a 'school for souls'. It is the Divinely sanctioned locus for Adam's advancement. The man formed *from* the earth fulfils his vocation *in* the earth.

Adam's constitution must therefore be admired not despised. Interpreting Genesis 2:7, the *locus classicus* of Old Testament anthropology,¹⁰⁷ Irenaeus follows Scripture's description of Adam as man of dust, עֲפָרָא מִדָּמָא, fashioned from virgin soil; 'the protoplast himself, Adam, had his substance from untilled and as yet virgin soil "for God had not yet sent rain, and man had not tilled the ground"'.¹⁰⁸ In the Lord's hands, אֲדָמָה constitutes Adam's body, 'God does indeed create after a skilful manner, while, [as regards] man, he is created skilfully'.¹⁰⁹ Adam's fashioning from the earth is recalled by the term בָּשָׂר (often translated 'flesh'), conveying human frailty and dependence upon God for life.¹¹⁰ Moulded from the soil, humanity is thus ontologically continuous with the created order, since from אֲדָמָה comes not just Adam, but birds, beasts and every tree (Genesis 2:9,19). Man and ground, אֲדָמָה and אֲדָמָה, are inextricably intertwined, as man's reddish-brown skin alludes to the reddish-brown earth.¹¹¹ Scripture's account of creation leaves no Cartesian dualism between soul and body, breath and earth. Anthropology cannot lose connection with the ground.

It is moreover the *triune God* who forms and shapes the man of dust. The earth neither sullies nor contaminates the Divine hands, who learn to handle flesh, 'for in Adam the hands of God

¹⁰⁷ G.Berkouwer: *Man: The Image of God*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962, p215.

¹⁰⁸ 3.21.10, p406.

¹⁰⁹ 4.11.2, p474.

¹¹⁰ Genesis 2:21,24, 6:3, Numbers 8:7, 1 Kings 21:27, Psalm 56:4, 90:3, 102:5, 103:14, Isaiah 40:6 (Wolff: *Anthropology*, p26-31).

¹¹¹ 'Man' and 'ground' appear together in Genesis 2:5, 3:17,19,23, 4:2,3,11-12, 5:29, 8:21, 9:20.

had become accustomed to set in order, to rule, and to sustain His own workmanship'.¹¹² The act denies the Gnostic chasm between spiritual and material, as Irenaeus assigns Adam's creation to all three Persons. The Father 'is just; He is good; He it is who formed man, who planted paradise'.¹¹³ Adam also came 'by the hand of God, that is, by the Word of God, for "all things were made by Him," and the Lord took dust from the earth and formed man'.¹¹⁴ The Spirit too plays His part, as man is 'moulded by His hands, that is, by the Son and Holy Spirit, to whom also He said, "Let Us make man"'.¹¹⁵ All three Persons accomplish the work.

Adam only comes to life, as Irenaeus regularly points out, as *passive* recipient of the Breath of God. Along with all creatures, he depends upon נְשִׁמַת חַיִּים.¹¹⁶ Yet he is also distinguished from other life, receiving Breath *directly* from the Lord. So Barth on Genesis 2:7 may say, 'it is to man, and to man alone, that God gives breath in this manner. It is man, and man alone, who becomes a living soul in this way'.¹¹⁷ It would appear this word נְשִׁמָּה distinguishes the living breathing person from the dead, for once the Lord withdraws His Breath, man returns to dust.¹¹⁸ But this God-given Breath, essential to life, does not constitute life's *fullness*. Distinguishing נְשִׁמָּה from רוּחַ, Irenaeus insists that the gift of Breath is *temporal*, whilst life bestowed by the Spirit is eternal. The distinction for him is foundational, 'for the breath of life, which...rendered man an animated being, is one thing, and the vivifying Spirit another, which also caused him to become spiritual'.¹¹⁹ To see in Divine breath the human soul is simply to read Irenaeus, along with Osborn, through Platonic eyes.¹²⁰ It is to miss the eschatological trajectory of creation.

The Breath of life we might say *derives* from the Spirit, נְשִׁמָּה from רוּחַ, though Scripture often employs the terms in parallel.¹²¹ Flesh requires רוּחַ, the creative power of life, as Wolff has repeatedly shown.¹²² Humanity thus *participates* in the Divine life by the Spirit. Life is not *inherent* to Adam, but is received as a continuous gift. Irenaeus therefore denies the *natural* immortality of the soul,

The soul herself is not life, but partakes in that life bestowed upon her by God. Wherefore also the prophetic word declares of the first-formed man, 'He became a living

¹¹² 5.5.1, p531.

¹¹³ 2.30.9, p406.

¹¹⁴ 3.21.10, p454.

¹¹⁵ 4.Preface.4, p463.

¹¹⁶ Genesis 7:22, Psalm 150:6.

¹¹⁷ Barth: *Church Dogmatics* III.1, p236.

¹¹⁸ Job 27:3, 1 Kings 17:17, Psalm 103:14, 104:29.

¹¹⁹ 5.12.2, p537.

¹²⁰ Osborn: *Irenaeus*, p220-1.

¹²¹ Both appear in Job 4:9, 27:3, 32:8, 33:4, 34:14, Isaiah 42:5, 57:16 [see also Psalm 104:29, 146:4, Ecclesiastes 12:7].

¹²² Wolff: *Anthropology*, p32-9.

soul,' teaching us that by the participation of life the soul became alive; so that the soul, and the life which it possesses, must be understood as being separate existences.¹²³

Virgin soil and Divine Breath *together* constitute man as נִפְנָה. There is no lofty Platonic soul mirroring the Divine image in man, no inherent human power of life. Rather man is נִפְנָה, a living breathing person ever dependent on Divine Breath. For נִפְנָה appears to convey throat, gullet, an organ of voracious hunger and insatiable greed, 'which cannot be satisfied by human effort'.¹²⁴ Adam as נִפְנָה is perpetually needy, dependent upon the life-giving Spirit, forever requiring the continuing grace of God.

However Genesis 2:7's holistic anthropology need not refute all dualist perspective, as materialist readings might like. Adam after all is comprised of (corporeal) earth and (incorporeal) Breath, a duality Irenaeus retains, 'but everyone will allow that we are [composed of] a body taken from the earth, and a soul receiving spirit from God'.¹²⁵ The Divine hands blend earth and breath harmoniously, in what Cooper calls 'a functional holism constituted from a duality of sources...without suggesting that the "spiritual" component is an immaterial entity such as Plato or Descartes would hold'.¹²⁶ The Irenaean soul, knowing no ontological priority over the body, takes the body's form in a relationship of interdependence, 'souls themselves possess the figure of the body [in which they dwell]; for they themselves have been adapted to the vessel [in which they exist]'.¹²⁷ Hence Robinson is rather one-dimensional when describing Hebrew personality as distinctly one of unity, over against any dualist notion.¹²⁸ Similarly Daley, though rightly seeing the man of dust as a totality, excessively downplays Hebrew conceptions of corporeality (conveyed by בָּשָׂר), thus reducing the corporeal dimension of eschatology in his interpretation of 1Corinthians 15.¹²⁹ So too Schep's materialist tone fails to distinguish σῶμα and σὰρξ, interpreting both as man's outward existence.¹³⁰ Irenaeus however perceives σὰρξ in *broader* terms, as conveying all that constitutes Adamic life, thus including [and sometimes referring to] bodily existence. The distinction preserves the harmonious duality of soul and body.

Against Gnostic division, Irenaeus therefore presents a holistic anthropology where soul and body are ontologically conjoined in shared dependence upon the triune God. Like a Potter the eternal God, artistic and inventive, fashions Adam from unpromising earth, granting Breath to

¹²³ 2.34.4, p412.

¹²⁴ Wolff: *Anthropology*, p11. נִפְנָה denotes 'throat' in Isaiah 5:14, 29:8, Habakkuk 2:5, Psalm 107:5, 143:6, Ecclesiastes 6:7. Similarly נִפְנָה communicates 'passion', 'craving' and 'life' in NIDOTTE, ed van Gemeren, Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996, vol 3, p133.

¹²⁵ 3.22.1, p454, 5.7.1.

¹²⁶ J.W.Cooper: *Body, Soul and Life Everlasting*, Leicester: Apollos, 2000, p49.

¹²⁷ 2.19.4, p386, Fragment XLIX. Elijah and Moses are recognisable at Christ's transfiguration without resurrection bodies.

¹²⁸ H.Wheeler Robinson: *The Christian Doctrine of Man*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1934, p69.

¹²⁹ Daley: *Resurrection*, p72.

¹³⁰ J.A.Schep: *The Nature of the Resurrection Body*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964, p93-106.

sustain him.¹³¹ This is ψυχικός life. But returning to dust hardly summates biblical eschatology. Man partakes ultimately in the Divine life only through the indwelling Spirit. It is the Spirit who fulfils the promise of being raised from dust, binding creation and redemption, as we shall see, through the hope of resurrection.¹³²

The Imago Dei

The man of dust, far from being the fruit of Divine instability, is formed from earth and breath and made according to the Divine Image. Adam is functionally whole, a soul-body duality free of graded ontology, depicting his Creator. Yet we have noted Irenaeus' successors are not always impervious to Gnostic dualisms, evinced whenever the mind/soul is paralleled to the Divine world over the body. Origen claims Christ's hypostasis extends universally in rational souls.¹³³ Whilst Augustine sees the soul encapsulate the Divine Image, as the intellect becomes 'the rational constituent in the soul of man'.¹³⁴ The Trinity finds analogical home in the mind's inner structure (memory/understanding/will), as knowledge is acquired through Platonic recollection.¹³⁵ With customary compliance, Calvin too describes the soul as primary seat of the Divine image, the epistemological locus of heavenly life.¹³⁶ Corporeality is underplayed, in a tradition stretching long before Philo,

Let no-one represent the likeness as one to a bodily form for neither is God in human form, nor is the human body God-like. No, it is in respect of the mind, the sovereign element of the soul, that the word 'image' is used.¹³⁷

Interestingly, Berkouwer perceives this dualist ontology buttresses creationism against traducianism, as if the directly created soul relates more intimately to God than the body fashioned by flesh.¹³⁸ Such graded ontology certainly neglects the *corporeality* of eschatology. With likeness residing in the soul, 'this likeness creates in the human mind a longing to return to the divine mind that is its pattern and origin'.¹³⁹

The theological trend has contributed to a developing rationalism. Intertwining Augustine with Aristotle, Aquinas accords to the soul as Form the constitution of Matter as body.¹⁴⁰ A

¹³¹ Genesis 2:7's יָצַר is repeated in the image (Psalm 2:9, Isaiah 45:9, Jeremiah 18:2-6). Without breath man returns to dust: Genesis 3:19, 18:27, Job 7:21, 10:9, 17:16, 34:15, Psalm 103:14, 104:29, Ecclesiastes 3:20, 12:7.

¹³² See 1 Samuel 2:8, Job 19:25, Psalm 113:7, Isaiah 52:2, Daniel 12:2.

¹³³ Chapter 1, p32, footnote 132.

¹³⁴ Augustine: *City*, 8.5, p306, 12.24.

¹³⁵ Augustine: *Confessions* 10.viii.12.

¹³⁶ Of this apparently 'there is no doubt': *Institutes*, 1.15.3, p186, 1.15.6-7, 2.2.12.

¹³⁷ Philo: *On Creation*, 23.69.

¹³⁸ Berkouwer: *Image*, p293-4.

¹³⁹ Watson: *Text*, p71.

¹⁴⁰ Cooper: *Body*, p11-13.

rationalist *imago* tends to define the body as chief source of sin,¹⁴¹ promoting in turn a Christian asceticism with (Gnostic) antipathies to all things terrestrial. Within the tradition, Descartes defines the self as ‘thinking thing’, the soul as essential ego. His disciple Malebranche denies real relationship between soul and body, whilst La Mettrie extends to human beings the Cartesian account of animals as automata.¹⁴² The trajectory continues through Kant whose rational morality, effectively banishing divine action, leaves ‘redemption achieved through the re-activation of the innate powers of the moral will’.¹⁴³ Apprehending the mind as essential ‘I’, such philosophy presents freedom as irretrievably non-relational,¹⁴⁴ an autonomous self-constitution against an oppressive monist Deity.

In stark contrast to this certain individualism, the *imago Dei* is also interpreted as human relationship, more precisely the way relationship derives from the perichoretic κοινωνία of the Trinity, ‘to be in the image of God is to be called to a relatedness-in-otherness that echoes the eternal relatedness-in-otherness of Father, Son and Spirit’.¹⁴⁵ Thus Zizioulas, echoing the Cappadocians, maintains our personhood should not be conceived in (primarily Western) terms of individual personality. Rather, personhood implies ‘a movement towards communion which leads to a transcendence of the boundaries of the “self” and thus to *freedom*’.¹⁴⁶ Personhood is no appendage but is constitutive to ontology, for it derives from a God whose Being *is* communion, ‘in God it is possible for the particular to be ontologically ultimate, because *relationship is permanent and unbreakable*’.¹⁴⁷ The ‘particular’ is integral to ontology because the perichoretic Trinitarian relationships constitute the Divine *substantia* itself, leaving human personhood as person-in-relation. This finds particular expression in the male-female relationship at creation. The image in ‘man’ is revealed as זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה, male and female (Genesis 1:26-7). Once woman is fashioned from man, Adam exultantly admires Eve as truly related to him (Genesis 2:19-23). The husband-wife union captures the theme,¹⁴⁸ as marriage becomes an illustrative model of the relation between Father and Son (1Corinthians 11:3).

The *imago* in Irenaeus, though reflective of the Trinity, does not directly replicate Zizioulas’ relational ontology. For Adam, constituted from earth and breath, *is* according to the Divine Image, even before the formation of Eve. The whole man communicates the likeness, because the whole man is fashioned by the triune God. Hence the explicit words,

He fashioned...man with His own hands, taking the purest, the finest and the most delicate [elements] of the earth, mixing...with the earth, in due measure, His own power; and

¹⁴¹ Hoekema: *Image*, p36-42.

¹⁴² Buckley: *Atheism*, p69-98, 146-64, 258-66.

¹⁴³ Gunton: *The Actuality of Atonement*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988, p7.

¹⁴⁴ Gunton: *One, Three, Many*, p44-7, 62-6.

¹⁴⁵ Gunton: *Christ and Creation*, p101.

¹⁴⁶ Zizioulas: ‘Human Capacity’, p408.

¹⁴⁷ Zizioulas: ‘On Being a Person’, ed Gunton *Persons*, p41, ‘Human Capacity’, p423.

¹⁴⁸ P.K.Jewett: *Man as Male and Female*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984, p20-34.

*because He sketched upon the handiwork His own form – in order that what would be seen should be godlike...man was placed upon the earth fashioned in the image of God...so that both according to the inspiration and according to the formation, man was like...God.*¹⁴⁹

Undertaking his calling as master and priest of creation, Adam fills and subdues the earth in obedience to the Divine charge (Genesis 1:28), as creation opens up to human history. Performing the royal task of tilling Eden's soil, he extends the fruitful Garden, naming the animals with magisterial authority (Genesis 2:15,19-20). We would be wrong however to reduce the Divine image to kingly rule, as Watson points out,

The image of God does not consist in rule over the creatures, for it can be asserted without reference to this (Gen 5:1,9:6); but rule over the creatures appears at least to be an immediate consequence of creation in the image of God.¹⁵⁰

Coupled with the question of 'image' is its relation to 'likeness', on which Irenaeus has generated much debate. Berkouwer, Hoekema and Hughes argue for a parallelism between *εἰκὼν* and *ὁμοίωσις*.¹⁵¹ Whilst Moltmann interprets *צֶלֶם* as outward representation, *דְּמוּת* as inward relationship, 'as His Image, human beings represent God on earth, as His similitude, they reflect Him'.¹⁵² Brunner (rather indiscriminately) distinguishes the terms, with the material *imago* (love for God and neighbour) lost in Adam's fall, whilst the formal *imago* remains in reason.¹⁵³ Irenaeus is regularly accused of similar inconsistency. Hick for example, concerned to buttress his own theory of 'epistemic distance', consciously exploits the so-called Irenaean distinction, whereby an imperfect humanity moves through moral struggle towards complete humanization, in what becomes a two-stage conception of creation.¹⁵⁴ Pannenberg too believes Irenaeus distinguishes *ὁμοίωσις* (as *actual* communion with Christ) from *εἰκὼν*.¹⁵⁵ Hughes detects in his writing seeds of future Roman anthropology (where an unimpaired image is preserved in the rational soul), whilst acknowledging that 'Irenaeus...must not be held responsible for the aberrations of Semi-Pelagianism. His exegesis of Genesis 1:26 may be questionable, but the theology inherent in his interpretation is governed by a sound scriptural instinct'.¹⁵⁶

Yet to dissect image from likeness is to risk misunderstanding Irenaeus' purpose. It is to forget the *project* of creation. For the bishop, refuting a Gnostic determinism claiming likeness as the

¹⁴⁹ *Demonstration* §11, p47 [italics mine], 4.Preface.4, 5.6.1.

¹⁵⁰ F.Watson: *Text and Truth*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997, p293.

¹⁵¹ Berkouwer: *Image*, p43-4, Hoekema: *Image*, p13, P.Hughes: *The True Image*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989, p7 (Genesis 1:26 mentions *צֶלֶם* and *דְּמוּת*, 1:27 uses *צֶלֶם*, 5:1 *דְּמוּת*, 5:3 both).

¹⁵² Moltmann: *Creation*, p219.

¹⁵³ Hoekema: *Image*, p53-58.

¹⁵⁴ J.Hick: *Evil and the God of Love*, London: Macmillan, 1985, p211, *God and the Universe of Faiths*, London: Macmillan, 1973, p53-4, 67, 191-2, *Faith and Knowledge*, London: Macmillan, 1967, p256, *Philosophy of Religion*, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1990, p44-8, *Death and Eternal Life*, London: Collins, 1976, p47-8.

¹⁵⁵ W.Pannenberg: *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, trans O'Connell, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985, p47-8 [also Kelly, p171].

¹⁵⁶ Hughes: *True Image*, p7-9.

(predetermined) possession of some, distinguishes εἰκών and ὁμοίωσις *eschatologically*. Image and likeness are distinct as different stages of the project, for image is received *in plasmate*, whilst likeness awaits the goal of the outpoured Spirit.¹⁵⁷ It is Irenaeus' eschatology that resolves the potential confusion. Man is no static creation. Adam in Eden is still ψυχικός, incomplete.

The image of God, for Irenaeus, is not a possession of the human being, but that for which it was created and towards which it moves – that which is mirrored in the whole human being as it advances in and towards the One who is Himself the Image of God.¹⁵⁸

Eden's breakdown of relationship brings loss of (embryonic) likeness. But the likeness, we shall see, is renewed in the true Image of God. Εἰκών, and particularly ὁμοίωσις, await *future* fulfilment.¹⁵⁹

Imago Christi

To say Irenaeus envisaged the *imago* as human relationship mirroring the triune life is true, but inadequate. For Adam is fashioned not as but *in* the Image of God.¹⁶⁰ And the Image of God is Jesus Christ, for whom Adam is formed as τύπος,¹⁶¹ created through and for the Son to reach his destiny in the Son. As Adam resembles His Saviour, the true Son is thus preached ἐν ἀρχῇ. Creation is not 'external' to the triune life; the Father creates for love of His eternal Son. The insight stretches Christology beyond redemption from sin, 'to man's destiny as the image of God in creation'.¹⁶²

The Image then is not Adam but Christ. Adam is formed *according to* the Son, as His pattern. So Irenaeus can say 'who else is superior to, and more eminent than, that man who was formed after the likeness of God, except the Son of God, after whose image man was created?'¹⁶³ Anthropology finds its bearings in Christology; Adam is fashioned after the pattern of Christ's body.¹⁶⁴ In this sense Irenaeus sees no great 'distance' between God and humanity, prompting Watson to say, 'all humans may be said to be like God in the sense that they are like Jesus'.¹⁶⁵ True humanity is redirected from Adam the copy to Christ the Image; only in Him can Adam

¹⁵⁷ 5.10.1-2, 5.6.1, Osborn: *Irenaeus*, p212, Lawson: *Irenaeus*, p8.

¹⁵⁸ MacKenzie: *Demonstration*, p49.

¹⁵⁹ Lawson misunderstands Irenaeus when claiming 'likeness' is inessential to humanity (*Irenaeus*, p202). On the contrary, man is only truly human when *the Spirit* transforms him into the likeness of God.

¹⁶⁰ כָּךְ - צִלְמֵנוּ (Genesis 1:26).

¹⁶¹ 2 Corinthians 4:4, Colossians 1:15, Romans 5:14.

¹⁶² Zizioulas: 'Human Capacity', p434.

¹⁶³ 4.33.4, p507, 5.16.2.

¹⁶⁴ Watson cites on this point Genesis 5:1-3, Exodus 20:4, Numbers 33:52, Deuteronomy 5:8, 1Samuel 6:5, 2Kings 16:10, Ezekiel 1:22,26-8 (*Text*: p288-90).

¹⁶⁵ Watson: *Text*, p291. Similarly, von Rad affirms 'Israel conceives even Yahweh himself as having human form', *Old Testament Theology*, trans D.Stalker, vol 1, London: Oliver&Boyd, 1962, p145.

and his posterity be truly human. The insight establishes a profound *Christological* connection between creation and redemption, as Pannenberg perceives in the bishop's work, 'by differentiating original and copy and subordinating the latter to the former, Irenaeus linked the OT statements about Adam's creation to Paul's statements about Jesus Christ as 'the last and definitive Adam'.¹⁶⁶

The question remains however whether Adam is τύπος of the *incarnate* or *eternal* Son. Most Irenaeian commentators prefer Christ as *Homo futurus*, with Adam formed according to this future pattern. Osborn for example claims the image is Christ's incarnate body, 'for Irenaeus, man as body and soul is the image of the incarnate Son'.¹⁶⁷ The bishop however makes no such assertion. Nor does he champion Barth's eternally incarnate Christ, where God and man are always reconciled in the God-Man relationship within the Person of the Son.¹⁶⁸ Irenaeus' Adam is traced neither through the incarnate nor the eternally incarnate Word, but through the *one eternal Son*, who assumes flesh. Adam is both foreshadow and copy of the true Image, whose incarnation reveals that which He eternally was, 'that He might call man forth into His own likeness'.¹⁶⁹

Infant Adam awaits deliverance in the spiritual Man, the Word made flesh. The ψυχικός attends the coming of Him who is Πνευματικός. Adam, *imago Christi*, foreshadows his Creator, through whom alone stands creation *and* redemption. Only by maturing into Him can humanity achieve Divine likeness.

The Unfinished Work

He who was formed but to-day, and received the beginning of his creation, is inferior to Him who is uncreated, and who is always the same. (2.25.3)

Childhood Innocence

We have remarked how Adam's formation from the earth initiates a broader project, as the Potter grants His clay a noble calling. Yet God-like Adam remains a child, unschooled in the duties of wise dominion, untrained in obedient Garden fellowship with his Lord. The project appears fragile in his hands, and proves to be so.

¹⁶⁶ Pannenberg: *Systematic Theology*, vol 2, p298.

¹⁶⁷ Even though Osborn's references (3.22.1, 4.37.7, 5.9.3, 5.12.4, *Demonstration* §11) hardly substantiate the claim (*Irenaeus*, p214-5).

¹⁶⁸ Barth: *Church Dogmatics*, 2/2, p172, 3/2, p242, 285, 4/1, p70, 145, 158, 166 [Jenson: *Alpha*, p81].

¹⁶⁹ 3.20.2, p450.

Yet Adam is not orphaned. Despite his lofty calling he remains an infant, νήπιος not ἄνθρωπος, formed but 'today', reasoning as a child. Lacking substantial nourishment, he receives only partial grace from the Divine hands. Here is a central Irenaean theme, where created things prove 'inferior to Him who created them...because, as these things are of later date, so are they infantile; so are they unaccustomed to, and unexercised in, perfect discipline'.¹⁷⁰ Adam's calling surpasses his nascent wisdom, since God has made him 'lord of the earth, and of everything that is in it',¹⁷¹ including dominion over angels. But lacking a mature, enlightened ethic, he could never attain *immediate* perfection,

God had power at the beginning to grant perfection to man; but as the latter was only recently created, he could not possibly have received it, or even if he had received it, could he have contained it, or containing it, could he have retained it.¹⁷²

This state of infancy thus initiates a project where Adam grows in loving fellowship with his Lord, and God withholds no gift to furnish man's maturing. Our gaze is drawn to the beauties of Eden, where

Nourishment...and growth might take place in luxury...a place was prepared for him, better than this earth - excelling in air, beauty, light, food, plants, fruit, waters and every other thing needful for life - and its name was Paradise.¹⁷³

In this call to maturity comes the Divine command (Genesis 2:17). Priest-king of creation, 'called to represent God to the creation and the creation to God',¹⁷⁴ Adam must choose an obedience bringing life and freedom. Yet Irenaeus insists that infant hands cannot secure such a grandiose project. The calling in fact belongs to 'the Son, according to whose image was man made'.¹⁷⁵ By contrast Adam is the 'becoming-man',¹⁷⁶ on a road to advancing maturity in Christ. Life becomes one of ongoing instruction, in a relational knowledge bringing growth and advancement, through man's grateful reception of all God's goodness,

Man receives advancement and increase towards God. For as God is always the same, so also man, when found in God, shall always go towards God. For neither does God at any time cease to confer benefits upon, or to enrich man; nor does man ever cease from receiving the benefits, and being enriched by God.¹⁷⁷

This call to completion is thus integral to human ontology, attained by the proper exercise of God-given freedom. It reveals the Divine intent for man. Hoekema also shares the Irenaean mood,

¹⁷⁰ 4.38.1, p521, 2.25.3.

¹⁷¹ *Demonstration* §12, p47, MacKenzie: *Demonstration*, p111-4.

¹⁷² 4.38.2, p521.

¹⁷³ *Demonstration* §12, p47.

¹⁷⁴ Gunton: *Christ and Creation*, p103.

¹⁷⁵ *Demonstration* §22, p53, 4.33.4, 5.16.1-2.

¹⁷⁶ Wingren: *Man*, ix.

¹⁷⁷ 4.11.2, p474, 4.9.3.

The integrity in which Adam and Eve existed before the Fall was not a state of consummate and unchangeable perfection. Man, to be sure, was created in the image of God at the beginning, but he was not yet a 'finished product'. He still needed to grow and be tested.¹⁷⁸

It is this human advancement that characterizes man's glory. Movement is not treated with Augustinian suspicion. On the contrary, it opens up possibilities for needful growth,

God is, man becomes; God makes, man is made; God is always the same, but man grows from beginning through middle to end; God makes well, and man is well made; God's perfection is shown in His glory which depends on man's enrichment.¹⁷⁹

There is no restoration to lost ideals, no harping back to a Golden Age; only enriching advancement. The anthropological project begins in a garden, but does not end there.

Moreover the future of Adam's posterity cannot be disassociated from a creation serving humanity's growth into the likeness of God,

All such has been created for the benefit of that human nature which is saved...and therefore the creation is suited to [the wants of] man; for man was not made for its sake, but creation for the sake of man.¹⁸⁰

Since עֵדֶן is drawn from עֵדֶן, the τέλος of both is inextricably intertwined. As Adam must mature, so Eden too is no walled garden, the tended paradise must extend into the untamed world. The seventh day not only promises but also anticipates a liberated cosmos to come.¹⁸¹ Through Adam come thorns and thistles, frustration and futility,¹⁸² yet humanity's advancement in Christ will eventually bring the maturing of creation itself.¹⁸³ Tertullian's creation *ex nihilo* appears to return to nothing, sharing no real eschatological vision.¹⁸⁴ Irenaeus by contrast grants the world its own destined τέλος. Creation too, currently bound to futility through Adam's fall, will share the fruits of man's maturing.

The vision proclaims the immense forbearance of a God who 'takes time' to fashion His handiwork, a God in no hurry. The Father foreknows all things, 'the Son works them out at the proper time in perfect order and sequence'.¹⁸⁵ God is ever patient with our spiritual slumber,¹⁸⁶ seeking our perfecting not dissolution. Time, no longer the mark of disorder and sin, receives

¹⁷⁸ Hoekema: *Image*, p83.

¹⁷⁹ Osborn: *Irenaeus*, p43.

¹⁸⁰ 5.29.1, p558.

¹⁸¹ Genesis 2:1-3, Deuteronomy 5:12-14, 'on the Sabbath the redemption of the world is celebrated in anticipation', Moltmann: *Creation*, p276.

¹⁸² Romans 8:20 picks up the language of Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12:8 [LXX: ματαιότης].

¹⁸³ Some including Osborn (*Irenaeus*, p86) link Irenaeus' 'advancement' to scientific evolutionary theory. The bishop however sees human maturity not in genetic mutation, but in movement towards Christ.

¹⁸⁴ Tertullian: *Against Hermogenes*, chap 34, in *ANF*, vol 3, ed A.Roberts/J.Donaldson, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973.

¹⁸⁵ 3.16.7, p443.

¹⁸⁶ 4.22.1, 4.4.3.

validation; 'the time of man is above all time conferred on him'.¹⁸⁷ Human life is shaped by the authentic unravelling of time, for man (and creation) are in the making. In Kearsley's words, 'the Irenaean scheme...is not merely *amenable* to the notion of a progressive human history directed towards the divinely conceived goal. It *requires* a history, and a long one at that'.¹⁸⁸ Time, no longer an enemy, is requisite for maturation.

Creation Disordered

Adam, engaged we might say in a marathon not a sprint, falls at the start. At one level Irenaeus acknowledges sin is a mystery, an absurd flight from the Divine hands.¹⁸⁹ The bishop certainly displays little sympathy for the anti-hero, since Eve was 'circumvented by craft; whereas Adam, making no fight whatever, nor refusal, partook of the fruit handed to him by the woman...an indication of the utmost imbecility and effeminacy of mind'.¹⁹⁰ In a certain anticipation of Barth, sin is understood as 'man's perverted dealing with the stern goodness and righteous mercy of God addressed to him in Jesus Christ'.¹⁹¹ Schwöbel captures its incongruity; 'sin is not only self-deception, but also self-contradiction insofar as by sinning human beings contradict their own destiny in the created order'.¹⁹² The poison intrudes into creation through one defiant act of idolatry. But the couple are not alone in the Garden. Adam is 'misled by the angel who, because of the many gifts of God, which He gave to the man, became jealous and looked on him with envy'.¹⁹³ Satan's jealousy becomes Irenaeus' (partial) answer to suffering and evil. Now victim of the covetous serpent, man is embroiled in Satan's apostate power, whilst remaining destined for Divine grace. Sin therefore becomes ultimately what Barth would call 'the ontological impossibility of created existence',¹⁹⁴ the promise that grace is victorious and evil defeated. The Fall does intrude on history. But Adam *chooses* fallen-ness, confirming life need not involve sin. Sin is not integral to humanness.

It is Satan who blasphemes the Divine intent, rendering man ungrateful to his Creator and blinding him to crave *immediate* (rather than progressive) Divine likeness (Genesis 3:4-5). Attentive to the serpent, Adam and Eve accept his perversion of the Image. Yet unable to deliver the promise, the serpent brings death, securing man's exile from Paradise.¹⁹⁵ Continuing his blasphemies, he invokes Cain to fratricide and multiplies wickedness, entangling man in his

¹⁸⁷ Wolff: *Anthropology*, p134.

¹⁸⁸ R.Kearsley: 'Christ and History: an early version' [p 87-101], *Issues in faith and history*, SBET, Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1989, p94.

¹⁸⁹ 2.28.7, 4.39.3.

¹⁹⁰ Fragment XVI, p571.

¹⁹¹ Jenson: *Alpha*, p37 (Barth: CD 4/3, p369).

¹⁹² Schwöbel: 'Human Being', ed Gunton *Persons*, p149.

¹⁹³ *Demonstration* §16, p49, 4.40.3.

¹⁹⁴ Jenson: *Alpha*, p41.

¹⁹⁵ 3.20.1, 3.23.1, 5.23.1, *Demonstration* §16.

apostate power.¹⁹⁶ As 'in the beginning he led men astray through the instrumentality of the serpent,'¹⁹⁷ so his blasphemies continue. Adam by contrast is declared both culpable *and* victim, 'a young child, not yet having a perfect deliberation...easily deceived by the seducer'.¹⁹⁸ Like children in a sweet shop, the first couple crave all things instantly, betraying a faithless rejection of Divine timing; 'Adam's sin was precisely impatience with the timing of the divine economy. He snatched at immortality and likeness to God before he was able to bear them, or God was ready to bestow them'.¹⁹⁹ The royal lord of the earth refuses 'to remain under God's guidance'.²⁰⁰

Irenaeus is sometimes accused of blunting the horrors of the Fall, a charge we must consider in due time.²⁰¹ The bishop certainly avows a *mitigated* judgment, as penitent Adam takes fig leaves, adopting 'a dress comfortable to his disobedience, being awed by the fear of God'.²⁰² Though this appears a curious reading, Irenaeus anthropology certainly requires Adam's repentance. For if the parent sheep perished, 'the whole human race is still held in a state of perdition'.²⁰³ Transgression brings God's curse upon the ground, as man endures the toilsome task of tilling a stubborn earth. Farrow best captures the tragedy; 'the fall put the becoming of man into reverse, and creation with him'.²⁰⁴ Yet it is the *serpent* that receives the fullness of the curse, whilst man is acknowledged the culpable victim.²⁰⁵ In Mackenzie's words, 'Irenaeus regards Satan as the perpetrator of the fall, man as the fallen victim from whom, as God's handiwork, the Creator's constancy has never been turned'.²⁰⁶ It is in fact Divine mercy that subsequently banishes Adam from the tree of life, ensuring the end of sin at death. Mitigated judgement includes grace upon the man 'involved in disobedience'.²⁰⁷

But does Irenaeus sufficiently acknowledge the dislocation wrought by Adam's fall? Cullmann thinks not, believing the bishop overstretches the rectilinear character of redemptive history, 'for Irenaeus the link runs on in so straight a course that the break which resulted from the fall into sin is not sufficiently taken into account. Everything is merely fulfillment'.²⁰⁸ Moreover Brown argues that Irenaeus' conception of death is but the natural end to Adam's imperfection. No longer penal, it contradicts Paul's theology.²⁰⁹ In answer to the charge, it is true that the bishop says of created things, 'inasmuch as they are not uncreated, for this very reason do they

¹⁹⁶ Genesis 4,6:1-5, *Demonstration* §17-18, 4.41.2, 5.24.4.

¹⁹⁷ 5.26.2, p555.

¹⁹⁸ *Demonstration* §12, p47.

¹⁹⁹ Minns: *Irenaeus*, p98.

²⁰⁰ Scroggs: *The Last Adam*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966, p8.

²⁰¹ Benoît for example argues Irenaeus 'advancement' underplays sin (*Saint Irénée*, p230).

²⁰² 3.23.5, p457.

²⁰³ 3.23.8, p457, against those, like Tatian, denying Adam's salvation.

²⁰⁴ Farrow: *Ascension*, p51.

²⁰⁵ 3.23.3, 5.16.1, *Demonstration* §12.

²⁰⁶ MacKenzie: *Demonstration*, p128.

²⁰⁷ 4.40.3, p524, 3.23.5, 3.23.6.

²⁰⁸ Cullmann: *Christ and Time*, p57.

²⁰⁹ Brown: 'Necessary Imperfection', p21-3.

come short of the perfect'.²¹⁰ But Brown misinterprets Scripture's language of 'perfecting'. To become 'perfect' is to become mature (τέλειος), meaning that infant pre-fallen Adam can be both 'imperfect' and sinless. His 'imperfection' at birth does not negate the tragedy of the Fall. The common charge misinterprets Irenaeus' language of perfection. Similarly Hick self-consciously rallies Irenaeus to his cause, claiming the church father anticipates his own description of sin as requisite to creation, because of the 'epistemic distance' between humanity and God apparently necessary to human freedom; 'man, as an ethical animal at an epistemic distance from God, inevitably sins'.²¹¹ It is ironic that suchaggiornamento of Gnostic cosmology seeks support from Irenaeus! Hick's misconceptions consequently exaggerate the perceived opposition between Irenaeus and Augustinian theology,

But within this framework two significantly different developments have taken place, the one...going through Augustine and the Western Church, the other going through Irenaeus and the Eastern Church', which 'provided the foundation for a radical Christian alternative to the Augustinian theodicy'.²¹²

A Gnostic earth becomes the place for 'soul-making', for perfecting the [universal] spiritual seed,²¹³ prompting Pannenberg's incisive words 'the thesis of an Irenaeus type of theodicy is a construction of Hick himself, inspired more by Schleiermacher than Irenaeus'.²¹⁴ For maturation is achieved not by the inner workings of evolution, but by the historical realization of human destiny in the one Man Jesus Christ. Ψυχικός Adam does confuse the purpose of creation; but confusion brings the coming Christ, the project's Τέλος.

Amidst the Fall shines the forbearance of God. Though Adam 'poured contempt upon His super-eminent goodness',²¹⁵ man's τέλος remains adoption through the Son. Apostasy inadvertently deepens man's knowledge of God's greatness and love, as Death serves the Divine plan for immortality. The favoured Irenaeus image exemplifying this hope is Jonah who, swallowed by the whale of death, is rescued by God to 'glorify Him the more who had conferred upon him such an unhoped-for deliverance'.²¹⁶ Divine love for Christ's copy remains, 'for God detested him who had led men astray; but by degrees, and little by little, He showed compassion to him who had been beguiled'.²¹⁷ The creation project runs aground in Adam, as man, enslaved to his adversary the devil, serves the tyrants of sin and death. Yet from Eve's seed comes One stronger than the strong man.

²¹⁰ 4.38.1, p521.

²¹¹ J.Hick: 'Coherence and the God of love again', *JTS*, vol 24, 1973, p522-8 [p524]. Hick's conception of human freedom is the problematical premise to the argument.

²¹² Hick: *Evil*, p210.

²¹³ Hick: *Philosophy*, p44-8.

²¹⁴ Pannenberg: *Systematic Theology*, vol 2, p109.

²¹⁵ 4.37.1, p518, 3.20.2.

²¹⁶ 3.20.1, p449, 4.38.4.

²¹⁷ 3.23.5, p457.

Accustoming God and Man

The charge against Irenaeus regarding Adam's rebellion is misconstrued. The one act of idolatry is the tragic reversal of the project. Yet for Irenaeus not to despair is for him to know the project was never anchored in this man. The disordering of creation is a tragedy. But the triune God will not wash His hands of His world. On the contrary, He patiently accustoms Himself to man, that Adam's offspring responding to grace may come to know Divine fellowship, 'there is no coercion with God, but a good will [towards us] is present with Him continually'.²¹⁸ To brand some by nature 'bad' whilst others 'good' is to risk repeating forms of Gnostic determinism, rather than to claim 'the light does never enslave any one by necessity; nor again, does God exercise compulsion upon anyone unwilling to accept the exercise of His skill'.²¹⁹ At times Irenaeus' eagerness to refute Gnostic determinism colours certain texts (as when injunctions to *Christians* are universally applied).²²⁰ Nevertheless theology remains 'a matter of persuasion rather than compulsion in faith and godliness'.²²¹

God appears to accustom Himself to man through different stages of the one οἰκονομία, as varied dispensations unravel within a progressive revelation. Those who dis sever one from another fail to trace the Divine economy,

All those who are of a perverse mind, having been set against the Mosaic legislation, judging it to be dissimilar and contrary to the doctrine of the Gospel, have not applied themselves to investigate the causes of the difference of each covenant.²²²

Such Marcionite ignorance finds much present-day counterpart, whenever for example the new covenant becomes *opus ex nihilo*, in contradistinction to the old. The Church would do well to remember the bishop's words,

It was one God the Father who spake with Abraham, who gave the Law, who sent the prophets beforehand, who in the last times sent His Son, and conferred salvation upon His own handiwork – that is, the substance of flesh.²²³

It is of course Love that underpins the Father's Presence in all dispensations, preparing humanity for the coming of Christ. Prophets, gospels and apostles uphold this same testimony, 'confessing the Father and the Son; but naming no other as God, and confessing no other as Lord'.²²⁴ The same God reveals Himself within the one οἰκονομία, in both the Mosaic law and

²¹⁸ 4.37.1, p518.

²¹⁹ 4.39.4, p523, 4.37.2.

²²⁰ 4.37.4-5 appeal to 1Corinthians 6:11-12, Ephesians 4:29, though Paul never implies Christian freedom to change is shared by all.

²²¹ MacKenzie: *Demonstration*, p185.

²²² 3.12.12, p434, 4.4.2.

²²³ 4.41.1, p525, 3.11.8.

²²⁴ 3.9.1, p422, 3.6.2, 3.12.2. All other 'gods' are idols of demons (3.6.3 cites Psalm 96:5, 81:9, Isaiah 44:9, Jeremiah 10:11).

the renewed covenant.²²⁵ The progression is best captured in the well-known parable, where the Father ‘planted the vineyard...led forth the people...sent the prophets...sent His own Son, and... gave the vineyard to those other husbandmen that render the fruits in their season’.²²⁶

The one Gospel is thus presented throughout salvation history via ‘types’. Early saints exemplify faithful obedience. Enoch and Noah are justified without circumcision and the Law. Abraham in particular, credited with righteousness before circumcision, prefigures both covenants, ‘that he might be the father of all who follow the Word of God’.²²⁷ The patriarchs sojourning in the world are ‘truly first-fruits, and indications of the [succeeding] fructification’.²²⁸ The Mosaic covenant, ‘a necessary stage of tutelage in the progress of humanity in the knowledge of God’,²²⁹ offers further typological instruction, as God calls Israel,

To the things of primary importance by means of those which were secondary; that is, things that are real, by means of those that are typical; and by things temporal, to eternal; and by the carnal to the spiritual; and by the earthly to the heavenly.²³⁰

There is therefore *imitation* in Irenaeus theology as there is in Gnosticism, but it is biblically grounded, with signifier and signified, type and reality, gifts of the one God. The old covenant, modelling Divine patience with human weakness,

Exhibited a type of heavenly things, inasmuch as man was not yet able to see the things of God through means of immediate vision; and foreshadowed the images of those things which [now actually] exist in the Church, in order that our faith might be firmly established.²³¹

Such parallels need not surprise us, since the Law is written by the finger of God, ‘and “the finger of God” is the Holy Spirit... issued from the Father’.²³²

The project brings maturing Divine-human fellowship. Precepts for sacrifice are subservient to faith.²³³ Spirit-filled prophets, ‘accustoming man to bear His Spirit...and to hold communion with God’,²³⁴ mark a further stage in proceedings, as the Father seasons humanity to follow the Word.²³⁵ The growing union ultimately foresees the incarnation, ‘during the long period between Adam and Christ, the divine and the human were prepared for the union they would achieve in Christ; they grew accustomed to dwelling together’.²³⁶

²²⁵ 3.10.5, 3.12.11.

²²⁶ 4.36.2, p515. Irenaeus reads into the parable Adam’s formation, the chosen fathers, the Mosaic dispensation, the sent prophets, the coming of the Son, the inclusion of Gentiles.

²²⁷ 4.25.1, p496, 4.16.2.

²²⁸ Fragment LV, p578.

²²⁹ MacKenzie: *Demonstration*, p150.

²³⁰ 4.14.3 (Exodus 25:40) p479, 4.15.1, 4.16.1, *Demonstration* §28-9.

²³¹ 4.32.2, p506.

²³² *Demonstration* §26, p57 (Matthew 21:28, Luke 11:20).

²³³ 4.17.1-4, 4.27.1 (Jeremiah 7, Isaiah 43:23-4, 58:6ff, Hosea 6:6).

²³⁴ 4.14.2, p479.

²³⁵ 4.5.3, 4.10.1, 4.11.1, 4.12.4, 4.14.2, 4.20.8, 4.21.3, 4.33.14 (Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 36, Isaiah 43:19-21).

²³⁶ Minns: *Irenaeus*, p89.

Yet even then the coming Son is mindful of our weakness, as the incarnate Word conceals His terrifying glory, passing through human infancy, that we might more readily receive Him,

For this cause our Lord, in these last times...came to us, not as He might have come, but as we were capable of beholding Him. He might easily have come to us in His immortal glory, but in that case we could never have endured the greatness of the glory; and therefore it was that He, who was the perfect Bread of the Father, offered Himself to us as milk, [because we were] as infants.²³⁷

To those wishing Adam were incapable of transgression, Irenaeus sees a purpose in delayed accomplishment,

Upon this supposition, neither would...communion with God be precious, nor would the good be very much to be sought after, which would present itself without their own proper endeavour, care, or study, but would be implanted of its own accord and without their concern...Thus it would come to pass, that their being good would be of no consequence, because they were so by nature rather than by will.²³⁸

In other words 'God has displayed long-suffering in the case of man's apostasy; while man has been instructed by means of it'.²³⁹ Such crafted fellowship needs time to mature. Here lies the project's glory.

As the *imago Christi* fails his calling, childishly refusing fellowship with God, history awaits the coming of the true Image. The pre-incarnate Word, Glory of the unseen Father, visits His own before assuming flesh. Only He reveals the unseen Father, and does so *eternally*. This is the bedrock of Irenaeian Christology, the Son 'present with His own handiwork from the beginning, reveals the Father to all; to whom He wills, and when He wills, and as the Father wills'.²⁴⁰ Those like Abraham who knew God ἐν ἀρχῇ 'received the revelation from the Son Himself'.²⁴¹ The pre-incarnate Son known to patriarchs and prophets has *already* disclosed His Father, rebuffing Gnostic assertions that the true God was undisclosed before Christ's coming. The one Father is always seen through His one Word. The Son is the Source of all revelation, the faithful Ruler of the Father's house, the beginning and end of Torah,

At one time conferring with His creature, and at another propounding His law; at one time, again, reproving, at another exhorting, and then setting free His servant, and adopting him as a son...and, at the proper time, bestowing an incorruptible inheritance, for the purpose of bringing man to perfection.²⁴²

His own Self-revelation through Moses and the Prophets becomes His revelation of the Father,

²³⁷ 4.38.1, p521.

²³⁸ 4.37.6, p520.

²³⁹ 4.37.7, p520.

²⁴⁰ 4.6.7, p469.

²⁴¹ 4.7.2, p470.

²⁴² 4.11.1, p474, 5.16.1, 4.9.1.

The Son of God is implanted everywhere throughout His writings: at one time...speaking with Abraham when about to eat with him; at another time with Noah, giving to him the dimensions (of the ark); at another, inquiring after Adam; at another, bringing down judgement upon the Sodomites; and again, when He became visible, and directs Jacob on his journey, and speaks with Moses from the bush.²⁴³

This is the primary purpose of Christophanies; the Father's Revelation prepares humanity for His assumption of flesh.

Irenaeus therefore describes the pre-incarnate Image of God visiting His world in the form of a Man. Enjoying Eden's paradise with Adam, 'He would walk and talk with the man prefiguring...the future'.²⁴⁴ The Son of God in human form eats with Abraham, before bringing the Father's judgment upon Sodom.²⁴⁵ It is He Abraham followed, 'walking as a pilgrim with the Word, that he might [afterwards] have his abode with the Word'.²⁴⁶ He commands Isaac's sacrifice, anticipating His own παράδοσις at the Father's hands. Jacob sees Him at Bethel, 'the Son of God speaking with mankind and being amongst them'.²⁴⁷ He addresses Moses regarding the afflictions of His people, 'delivering us from the dominion of the Egyptians, that is, from all idolatry and ungodliness'.²⁴⁸ Assuring Moses would behold God in the cleft of a rock, He is later transfigured before him. Accompanying Israel's flight from Egypt, He fights against Amalek.²⁴⁹ He the Angel of the Lord appears to Balaam, as the prophets 'see the Son of God as a man conversant with men'.²⁵⁰ Such visitations, affirming the Son as *eternal* Image of the unseen Father, also prepare mankind for the Incarnation. This dual purpose to Christophanies is long attested. Even Calvin acknowledges the Word as the chief Angel 'who already at that time, as a sort of foretaste, began to fulfil the office of Mediator'.²⁵¹ And with contemporary echo, Watson maintains 'while the Word has not yet become flesh, He already discloses the invisible Father and enacts the Divine solidarity with humankind which will reach its logical conclusion in the incarnation'.²⁵² Borland too discerns Christophanies within the progressive revelation of God, anticipating a time when the Son finds permanent union with human nature.²⁵³

²⁴³ 4.10.1, p473, 2.28.2, 3.5.3, 3.34.3, 4.2.3, 4.12.4, 4.20.4.

²⁴⁴ *Demonstration* §12, p47. See also Theophilus: *To Autolycus* 2.22.

²⁴⁵ 3.6.1, 3.11.8, *Demonstration* §44 (Genesis 18-19).

²⁴⁶ 4.5.3, p467.

²⁴⁷ *Demonstration* §45, p70.

²⁴⁸ 4.5.2, p467, *Demonstration* §46, p70, 4.20.9.

²⁴⁹ 4.20.9, 3.16.4 (Exodus 17:16). Much Christological interpretation echoes Justin; see *Dialogue with Trypho* §91, 112, 131 in *ANF*, vol 1, ed Roberts/Donaldson, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.

²⁵⁰ Fragment XXIII, 4.20.8, p490.

²⁵¹ Calvin: *Institutes* 1.13.10, p132, 1.14.5.

²⁵² Watson: *Text*, p324.

²⁵³ Borland confirms the 'Angel of the Lord' carries Divine authority: predicting the future (Genesis 16:10-12, Exodus 3:20), forgiving sins (Exodus 23:21), requiring obedience (Judges 2:1-2), revealing Himself as Redeemer (Genesis 48:16, Exodus 3:8), receiving prayer and sacrifice (Genesis 48:15-16, Judges 13:19-23), performing miracles (Exodus 3:20, Judges 6:21, 13:20) and hallowing ground (Exodus 3:5, Joshua 5:15). J.Borland: *Christ in the Old Testament*, Ross-shire: Focus, 1999, p41-4, 112-3.

The gracious accustoming of God to man sees Christ proclaimed in Prophets' words and works. For Christ is Scripture's Treasure, tirelessly mined by Lyon's bishop.²⁵⁴ The Law becomes a pedagogue to bring us to Him.²⁵⁵ Meticulous study of the Prophets sees 'the whole conduct, and all the doctrine, and all the sufferings of our Lord...predicted through them'.²⁵⁶ For the Prophets proclaim Him *Davidic King*, praised in the angelic chorus,²⁵⁷ the Stone not hewn by human hands, smiting temporal kingdoms and filling the earth.²⁵⁸ In Irenaeus words, 'this King is Christ, the Son of God become the Son of man, that is, become the Fruit from the Virgin, who was of the seed of David'.²⁵⁹ Moreover Prophets recount His *assumption of flesh*. Born of Jewish parentage, of Abraham and David,²⁶⁰ He is God en-fleshed, the rod of Moses engulfing Egypt,²⁶¹ His obedient body filled with the Spirit.²⁶² His *miraculous healings* and *rejection* are foretold in consummate detail.²⁶³ His shed blood 'points out the recapitulation that should take place in his own Person of the effusion of blood from the beginning'.²⁶⁴ Jacob sees the tree by which believers ascend to heaven, Moses preaches to Israel 'the Word...hanging on the tree',²⁶⁵ on a day the sun is obscured. His *passion* and *exaltation* are intricately described in Psalms, Isaiah and elsewhere.²⁶⁶ Moreover prophets enact the fruits of Christ's work. Moses joins his Midianite wife to Israel, 'showing by anticipation that the wild olive tree is grafted into the cultivated olive', whilst Hosea's 'wife of whoredoms' describes God calling a Church from the fornications of the earth.²⁶⁷ Joshua (Ἰησοῦς) leads the people into the land, securing our future inheritance. These persecuted members of Christ anticipate their Head, as the prophet-apostle John, the Elijah to come, heralds Messiah's arrival.²⁶⁸

Within this unravelling of salvation history, it is always the Lord Jesus Christ who redeems God's people. Knowing Christ's advent would secure an innumerable seed, Abraham 'desired to see that day...that he might himself embrace Christ'.²⁶⁹ In Him we like stones are raised as

²⁵⁴ Scripture after all finds its Subject in Christ: Matthew 5:17, Luke 24:25-7, 44-7, John 5:39, 2 Corinthians 1:19-20.

²⁵⁵ 4.2.7 (Galatians 3:24), 4.4.2, 4.12.5, 5.22.1.

²⁵⁶ 4.34.1, p511, 4.33.15, *Demonstration* §42.

²⁵⁷ 3.9.2 (Psalm 132:11, Numbers 24:17), 3.10.3, 3.16.2, 4.10.2 (Genesis 49:10-12).

²⁵⁸ 3.21.7, 4.20.11 (Daniel 2:34, 7:13-14).

²⁵⁹ *Demonstration* §36, p63 sees 2 Samuel 7:12-13, Psalm 132:11 expound *virgin* conception (Christ comes from the *womb* not loins).

²⁶⁰ *Demonstration* §58, 3.20.4 (Habbakuk 3:3-5), 4.33.11 (Psalm 76:1), §63 (Micah 5:2), §59 (Isaiah 11:1-10).

²⁶¹ 3.21.4-5 (Isaiah 7:10-17), *Demonstration* §53-4, 3.21.8 (Exodus 7:9, 8:19).

²⁶² *Demonstration* §71 on Lamentations 4:20; Christ's body becomes 'a shade for the glory of the Spirit', p86.

²⁶³ 4.33.11, *Demonstration* §67 (Isaiah 29:18, 35:3-6), 4.33.1 (Psalm 118:22), 4.33.12 (Isaiah 50:6, Psalm 22), §68 (Lamentations 3:20), §74 reads Herod and Pilate in Psalm 2:1-2, §81 sees Judas' betrayal in Zechariah 11:12-13.

²⁶⁴ 5.14.1, p541 (Genesis 4:10, 9:5-6, Luke 11:50-1), 3.23.7, 4.2.7 (Genesis 3:15).

²⁶⁵ *Demonstration* §45 (Genesis 28), 4.10.2 (Deuteronomy 28:66), p474, 4.33.12 (Amos 8:9-10).

²⁶⁶ *Passion*: 4.33.12, *Demonstration* §79-82 mention Psalms 22, 69, 3.12.8, 4.33.1, §67-70 recall Isaiah 53. Isaiah 9:5-7 foresees the cross 'upon which His shoulders were nailed', for the cross is His government (§56, p77). Also §72 (Isaiah 57:1-2), §79 (Isaiah 65:2). *Exaltation*: 4.33.1 (Daniel 7:13, Malachi 4:1, Isaiah 11:4), 4.33.11 (Psalms 45, 110, Zechariah 12:10), 4.33.13 (Ps 19:6, 99:1, Is 2:17).

²⁶⁷ 4.20.12, p492.

²⁶⁸ 4.33.10, 4.34.4, Fragment XIX, 3.10.1, 3.11.4.

²⁶⁹ 4.7.1, p469, 4.7.2, 4.8.1, 4.21.1.

Abraham's children, fulfilling Moses' prophesy of Gentile abundance.²⁷⁰ Quoting Calvin's future words, 'the hope of all the godly has ever reposed in Christ alone'.²⁷¹ In Him Scripture's testimony is complete, the apostolic Church reaping what patriarchs and prophets had previously sown, witnessed in the Ethiopian eunuch 'already prepared in the fear of God by the prophets'.²⁷² For Scripture says of Christ,

He was a man without comeliness, and liable to suffering; that He sat upon the foal of an ass; that He received for drink vinegar and gall; that He was despised among the people, and humbled Himself even to death; and that He is the holy Lord, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Beautiful in appearance, and the Mighty God coming on the clouds as the Judge of all men.²⁷³

Knowledge of this one Lord secures salvation. For He is the coin granted to all the vineyard's workers, upholding the one οἰκονομία.²⁷⁴ Salvation has always been through Him.

This chapter has explored how the triune God gives purpose and direction to creation. The Father embraces the world with His two hands, fashioning the man of dust from the earth and granting him Breath. Sustained by the Spirit, Adam is made according to the Image. Yet a childish refusal to obey the Son's command prompts loss of Divine likeness. The project appears to founder on his disobedience, the *imago Christi*'s posterity proves likewise powerless. Yet the creation project is not over. The promise of advancement remains. God accustoms Himself to man, through varied dispensations in the one οἰκονομία. The Spirit instructs patriarchs and indwells prophets, anticipating the Word made flesh, the Spirit-filled Image of God, foreseen in His many visitations. It is He who eternally reveals the unseen Father, He through whom creation comes, in whom creation coheres, to whom creation will go. The cosmic hope, the intimate fellowship of God and man, requires His birth as One of Adam's race. Creation awaits the coming of the true Man.

²⁷⁰ *Demonstration* §93 (Hosea 1:10, Ezekiel 11:19-20, Matthew 3:9). 'Our hearts drawn out...from stony services by faith see God and become children of Abraham...made righteous by faith', p96, §94-5 (Isaiah 54:1, Deuteronomy 28:44).

²⁷¹ *Institutes*, 2.6.3, p345. OT saints 'had and knew Christ as Mediator, through whom they were joined to God and were to share in His promises' (2.10.2, p430). They 'put in Him all trust of future blessedness' (2.10.23, p448).

²⁷² 4.23.1, p495, 4.24.1-2, 4.25.3.

²⁷³ 3.19.2, p449.

²⁷⁴ 4.36.7 (Matthew 20).

CHAPTER 3: 'A SAVIOUR FROM WITHIN'

It was for this end that the Word of God was made man, and He who was the Son of God became the Son of man, that man, having been taken into the Word, and receiving the adoption, might become the Son of God.
(3.19.1)

Our second chapter explored how the creation fails to flourish under the care of Adam and his children. The created order withers for lack of true dominion. But the promise of advancement remains. For the Spirit through the prophets anticipates the coming of the true Image, whose numerous visitations to Old Testament saints culminate once-for-all in His assumption of Adamic life. The hope of creation rests upon the Man of heaven (1Corinthians 15:47-8). Creator becomes created. Most importantly the project knows no radical Gnostic disjuncture. Redemption is not the imposition of a new order against the old. On the contrary, newness emerges from **within** the old creation. For the transition from old to new is anchored in one οἰκονομία, that is the purpose of the Father mediated and accomplished by the Son in the creative power of the Spirit. The Father's disclosure, through His Son's numerous appearances to members of the Old Testament Church, initiates a pattern of revelation culminating in the Incarnation. And it is particularly here, when the Word assumes flesh, that the triune God begins a new generation of life from the midst of the old. The transition occurs in the virgin womb, as the Saviour conjoins His own handiwork. Creator becomes created, and through a new generation wrought by the Spirit upon flesh He calls that handiwork to maturity, redeeming creation from within.

The Word as Revelation of the Father

We have already noted how Irenaeus Christology centres upon the Word as *the* revelation of the Father. The Man of heaven is the Father's true radiance, the exact imprint of His Being, in stark contrast to Gnostic claims that no *single* aeon can sufficiently reveal the invisible God. Instead each brings 'its own enunciation, because no one of them was capable by itself of uttering the whole'.¹ Divine incomprehensibility thus *requires* a descending chain of splintered revelation, leaving the earthly saviour a mere imitation of the precedent heavenly aeon.² The Son however is no aeonic expression of the incomprehensible Father, a demiurgic channel from the 'spiritual'

¹ 1.14.2, p337.

² 1.15.2-3, p339.

to the 'material', but is instead the true unblemished radiance of the unseen God.³ Irenaeus thus warns us against Christologies depicting the Son as purely impersonal function of an incomprehensible God. One might mention Arianism (and its contemporary garb among Jehovah's Witnesses), whereby the created Son is only an aeonic expression, a passible form of the impassible God, a demiurgic channel to the transient world. Athanasius was right to charge the Arians of Gnosticism, for 'behind all expression of Arian thought lay the hard and glittering syllogism that God is impassible; Christ, being γεννητός, was passible; therefore Christ was not God'.⁴

The bishop, we might say, instructs us against the Gnosticism under-girding much inter-faith dialogue today, whereby the Son is debased as mere avenue of revelation, received alongside other revelatory aeons of the Divine, enshrined in all manner of alternative religions. Such inter-faith projects require a 'Gnosticized' Son. The Irenaeian testimony however knows the Son as no aeon among many, no mere fraction of the Incomprehensible, but as the *exclusive* revelation of the unseen God, the very locus of the Father. In Irenaeus' own words, 'no one can know the Father, unless through the Word of God, that is, unless by the Son revealing [Him]'. 'For no other being had the power of revealing to us the things of the Father, except His own proper Word'.⁵

Moreover Irenaeus declares the Son the *eternal* revelation of the Father. It is the Λόγος (not simply Λόγος ἑνσαρκος) who has always been 'the visible of the Father'.⁶ Gnostics claim the true God was unknown prior to the coming of Christ. But the bishop recalls Jesus' timeless assertion 'no-one *knows* the Father but through the Son'.⁷ The true God could always be known, His Mediator is always the Son. The eternal Word announces the unseen Father from the beginning, for the Son is 'the dispenser of the paternal grace...revealing God to men through many dispensations'.⁸ Ancient Israel thus departed from God by refusing His Word, remaining ignorant of Him who revealed the Father to the patriarchs.⁹

By imaging the unseen Father throughout Israel's history, the Son ensures no part of the οἰκονομία is dissevered from Him. In Mackenzie's words, 'the "dispensations" of God are not independent of the Word by Whom God is known'.¹⁰ The Son's eternal mediation is crucial to the oneness of the project. The Christophanies, rather than undermining the centrality of

³ The Word knows no 'beginning and course of production' (2.13.8, p375), His eternal generation is indescribable (2.28.6).

⁴ Prestige: *Patristic Thought*: p156.

⁵ 4.6.3, p468, 5.1.1, p526, 4.5.1, 4.6.4, 4.7.3, *Demonstration* §47.

⁶ 4.6.6, p469. See chapter 2, footnote 61.

⁷ 4.6.1, p468 [Matthew 11:27, John 14:6].

⁸ 4.20.7, p490, 4.20.6.

⁹ 4.7.4 [Genesis 18:1, Exodus 3:7-8].

¹⁰ McKenzie: *Demonstration*, p170.

Incarnation as sometimes claimed, progressively reveal the true God, preparing humanity for the Word's assumption of flesh. Only then is the Father most fully revealed, 'the pre-existent Son has always been the Father's image, but supremely and decisively in the incarnation'.¹¹ There is progression in salvation history, as the Lord fulfils the prophets' testimony, 'by bringing Himself who had been announced'.¹² The Son is no impersonal mode, no demiurgic demi-god. He is the eternal Visible of the unseen Father, whose revelation finds its τέλος in flesh.¹³

This Irenaean perspective on the Son's eternal mediation offers a robust answer to contemporary departures from Christological orthodoxy. Established theologians for example readily question the Son's pre-existence, as when Dunn denies Jesus of Nazareth's self-consciousness as the eternal Son of God, preferring to interpret the title 'second Adam' as referent to resurrection.¹⁴ Moreover by disassociating the 'Angel of the Lord' from the Son, Dunn undercuts Christ's eternal mediation, denying in turn Torah's testimony to plurality within the Godhead; 'in short, this *angel* talk seems to have been an early, still unsophisticated attempt to speak of God's immanent activity among people'.¹⁵ The language of 'Wisdom personified' no longer speaking of Son or Spirit, simply denotes Yahweh's wise creation purpose, whilst favoured Irenaean passages such as 1Corinthians 8:6 and Colossians 1:16-17 merely portray Christ as the creative act and power of God.¹⁶ Dunn appears to downplay the import of these texts, so denying the eternal Deity of Christ (and hence the Trinity itself), to advocate at best a Christological adoptionism secured at the resurrection. The charge equally stands against Hick, whose reformulation of the homoousion sees Christ (alongside others) simply incarnate the Divine quality of Agape.¹⁷ Yet more subtle contemporary departures from the Irenaean testimony persist, whenever for example 'creation' is apportioned to the Father and 'salvation' to the Son, or plurality within the Godhead is denied in early Scriptures, or the unity of the project is clouded by an implicit twofold *via salutis*, where old covenant saints trust a promise and new covenant saints a Person.

The pre-existent Son, the Father's eternal Image, reveals the Image supremely in His incarnation. The Word becomes the son of Adam, neither confusing nor obscuring His testimony to the Father. On the contrary, the unseen God is *most* manifest in the Son's assumption of flesh. The Λόγος ἑνσαρκος is the Father's true revelation, whose 'tabernacling' amongst us¹⁸ wholly effects the Father's intent, 'the Son performs the good pleasure of the

¹¹ A.Hanson: *The Image of the Invisible God*, London: SCM, 1982, p91.

¹² 4.34.1, p511.

¹³ Borland understands Christophanies in this light, *Christ*: p102-17.

¹⁴ J.D.G.Dunn: *Christology in the Making*, London: SCM, 1989, p32-6.

¹⁵ Dunn: *Christology*, p150.

¹⁶ Dunn: p163-212.

¹⁷ Hick: *God and Universe*, p148-64.

¹⁸ John's choice of σκηνώω connects the glory of the Lord with a new 'tabernacle' (Exodus 40:34-5, John 1:14).

Father; for the Father sends, and the Son is sent, and comes'.¹⁹ The incarnate Son is the act of revelation, the sign and mirror of God's eternal decree, revealing the Father as a compassionate relational God,²⁰ 'the Incomprehensible [acting thus] by means of the comprehensible, and the Invisible by the visible'.²¹ This one Lord Jesus Christ is no Aeon-like abstraction, liberal theology's Ideal of Love. Revelation flows not merely *through* Him, as the Schleiermachian school would like. Rather He is the revelation, the Father's self-expression, highlighting the shortcomings of a quasi-Marcionite disassociation of Father from Son. Gunton acknowledges the trend, 'the pervasive feature of Western Christology is its separation between the Father – seen in terms of power and impassibility – and the Son, with his tears and suffering'.²²

Neither is it quite sufficient to say the Λόγος ἑνσαρκος reveals the unseen Father. For the Son of man discloses the *triune* God. Irenaeus reminds us the very Name *Christ* announces the Trinity, 'in the name of Christ is implied He that anoints, He that is anointed and the unction itself with which He is anointed'.²³ The incarnation is the desire of the Father, executed by the Son in the power of the Spirit, announcing a renewal of creation paralleling the formation of Adam, as 'in the last times, not by the will of the flesh nor by the will of man, but by the good pleasure of the Father, His Hands formed a living Man'.²⁴ Indeed the Trinitarian pattern of commanding, fashioning and nourishing traced in the first creation finds echoes in this new creation - the Father 'calls' the Word to assume flesh, the Son 'establishes' the new creation by assuming that flesh, the Spirit 'nourishes' this creation by empowering the Word made flesh.²⁵

The Λόγος ἑνσαρκος therefore brings a new stage in the οἰκονομία, now Creator becomes created. In Cullmann's words, 'the entire redemptive history of the Old Testament tends toward the goal of the incarnation',²⁶ as former saints await the greater grace of the coming Son *of David*.²⁷ Only then does creation see its King, anticipating the final vision of His glory as Judge and Saviour,

For it is necessary that those [beings] which are judged do see the judge, and know Him from whom they receive judgement; and it is also proper, that those which follow on to glory should know Him who bestows upon them the gift of glory.²⁸

The incarnate Word of God brings to fruition the Spirit-filled testimony of His prophets, and in His virgin conception initiates the new creation. Far from *responding* to events outside the

¹⁹ 4.6.3, p468, 1.9.3 [John 3:16].

²⁰ Here Irenaeus prefigures Barth, seeing no obscure electing decree outside of Christ (*Church Dogmatics* 2/2, p51-8).

²¹ 3.11.5, p427, 3.5.1, 3.11.6, 3.13.2, 4.20.5.

²² Gunton: *Yesterday*, p136.

²³ 3.18.3, p446.

²⁴ 5.1.3, p527.

²⁵ P.Cumin: 'Irenaeus', p12.

²⁶ Cullmann: *Christ and Time*, p135.

²⁷ 4.11.3. Note the incarnational title 'Son of David' in Matthew (9:27, 15:22, 20:30, 21:9).

²⁸ 3.9.1, p422.

triune life, the incarnation discloses the Divine will. Irenaeus repeatedly pronounces σάρκωσις God's original plan, the glorious advancement of His creative purpose from the beginning. Jesus is no 'Healer of the breach', stretching across a chasm carved by Adam (the standard fare of countless evangelistic literature). He is instead the fulfilment of the promise grounding *all* God's works. Jenson's words concerning Barth could equally apply to Irenaeus,

God has not become man just to get rid of hindrance, but to fulfil the original promise: 'I will be Your God'. For in Jesus Christ we do not have to do with a second, and subsequent, but with the first and original content of the will of God, before and above which there is no other.²⁹

The original promise of Divine-human fellowship requires the σάρκωσις of the eternal Son.

Most relevant to our discussion, the incarnate Word announces not just the perichoretic intimacy between Father and Son, but also the supreme importance of *flesh*. The Son was neither polluted nor dishonoured when He assumed Adamic life. Becoming υἱὸς τοῦ Ἀδάμ (Luke 3:23,38) did not contaminate His Person, nor compromise His testimony to the Father. Assuming σάρξ was not demeaning. On the contrary, it was by the Son assuming flesh that the unseen Father is most clearly seen. Divine life is *most manifest* in flesh. The incarnation of the eternal Son is the unanswerable riposte to Gnostic disparagement of earthly life, as the material becomes the vehicle of God's self-communication.³⁰ Yet the incarnation, we must remember, is the assumption of σάρξ not σῶμα. It includes all that pertains to Adam's life, not simply physical embodiment. Here is a distinction often confused in popular Christology, leaving the incarnation (to quote one popular publication) 'a strangely unnecessary belief...in the sense that no other doctrine hangs on it'.³¹ Naturally σάρκωσις *includes* assuming a human body. But Irenaeus does not share Athanasius' image of the Word wielding a human body as instrument.³² Incarnation is far more. It is the Son conjoining with the substance of His creation, becoming like Adam to redeem the descendants of Adam. In this Irenaean light, the Incarnation becomes the Christological renewal of creation from within, that 'the Word of the Father and the Spirit of God, *having become united with the ancient substance of Adam's formation*', might render man 'living and perfect'.³³

The Word of God as *eternal* revelation of the Father confirms the unity of the οἰκονομία, by perceiving Christological mediation beyond the confines of Incarnation. Because the eternal Word fulfils the promise grounding all God's works, there is intentioned movement towards

²⁹ Jenson: *Alpha*, p50-1, Barth: *CD*, 4/1, p35-6, 48.

³⁰ Augustine, excepting earlier citations, agrees: 'by His incarnation He showed us...the true Divine nature cannot be polluted by the flesh' (*City*, 9.17, p364).

³¹ *The Leadership Papers*, London: St Matthias Press, 1990, p37.

³² Athanasius: *On Incarnation*, §42.1-7, in *NPNF*, 2nd series, ed P.Schaff & H.Wace, vol IV, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975.

³³ *Italics mine*, 5.1.3, p527.

σάρκωσις even before the garden tragedy. It is this affirmation of the flesh, intentioned for the Son from eternity and accomplished in history, that readily dispels Gnostic disparagement of all things earthy. The eternal Word assumes flesh, becoming the obedient Son of Adam none other could be, whilst yet remaining his Lord.

The Word as Revelation of True Man

The Word then is 'true God', whose eternal revelation of the unseen Father finds supreme expression in Adamic flesh. But the Word is also 'true Man', who defines the Adamic project ἐν ἀρχῇ, and advances it by union with His workmanship. The Son is both Image of the Father and true Man from eternity. Adam after all is imago *Christi*, fashioned as τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος, a copy of the Son.³⁴ At incarnation the Son assumes the life of Adam, conforming the τύπος to Himself. That which He eternally was, He declared Himself to be. The Word as true Man therefore predates the virgin conception, implied by the bishop's refrain 'Man among men'. Adam is fashioned as foreshadow and copy of the Λόγος ἄσαρκος, who later comes from Adam's line to reveal what He eternally was. Adam is image of the Image, similitude of the eternal Man. This need not question the necessity of incarnation. For only by assuming Adamic flesh can the Son both reveal the true Image and conform Adam's race to Himself. In Irenaeus words, Christ 'both showed forth the image truly, since He became Himself what was His image; and...re-established the similitude after a sure manner, by assimilating man to the invisible Father'.³⁵ The Word made flesh became the perfect Adamic image of the Image He eternally was. This might seem surprising. But texts such as Romans 5:12-21, 1Corinthians 15:47 and Philippians 2:5-11 may well present the Son as pre-existent heavenly Man, in contrast to Genesis 2:7's man of dust. Exploring the Adam-Christ contrast of Philippians 2:6, Cullmann for one interprets the Image of God as 'Divine Man',

Unlike Adam, the Heavenly Man, who in his pre-existence represented the true image of God, humbled himself in obedience and now receives the equality with God he did not grasp as a 'robbery'. Although he was already υἱός, now he becomes, as Rom 1:4 puts it, υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει. As Acts 2:36 expresses it, he is 'made' *Kyrios*.³⁶

Elsewhere he argues,

The pre-existent Son of Man, who is with God already at the beginning and exists with him as his image, is *by his very nature* divine Man. From this point of view the whole toilsome discussion which dominated earlier Christological controversies actually becomes superfluous.³⁷

³⁴ 2 Corinthians 4:4, Colossians 1:15, Romans 5:14 [4.33.4, 5.16.2].

³⁵ 5.16.2, p544.

³⁶ Cullmann: *Christology*, p181.

³⁷ Cullmann, p191. Cullmann reads the Christological discussion of 'natures' as a Greek import [p1-9].

Similarly the Roman theologian Ochagavia sees Irenaeus' depiction of Adam as *imago Christi* imply that 'even before the Incarnation the Word possessed some sort of a human form or shape'.³⁸ The question relates to the Son's *eternal* revelation, since to locate mediation only in the incarnate Son is to fall precisely into the Gnostic trap,

Irenaeus' point is precisely to show the continuity and homogeneity of the Old and the New Economy with regard to man's knowledge of God. To say that the Son *incarnate* is the necessary mediator of the knowledge of the Father comes down to favouring the position of the opponents by granting that there was no knowledge of the Father in the Old Testament.³⁹

Neither is the Presence of the Spirit upon the Christ a novel Gift at incarnation. Rather, the eternal Son as Man is the one Lord Jesus *Christ*, the *Spirit-anointed* Saviour, who becomes the Word made flesh. The Λόγος ἁσάρκος is anointed with the oil of gladness attested in Psalm 45:6-7; 'for the Son, as He is God, receives from the Father...the throne of the everlasting kingdom, and the oil of anointing above His fellows; and the "oil of anointing" is the Spirit by whom He is the Anointed'.⁴⁰ The Son *eternally* anointed by the Spirit proclaims His Kingship as the Spirit-filled Son of Adam, born of the virgin, baptized to fulfil all righteousness. The eternal Man is the Anointed One, indwelt by a Spirit who shapes the eschatological hope of Adam's race.

Once the eternal Son is seen as true Man, Incarnation becomes the *crowning* of His Being, the glory of His Person. In this sense, it brings no radical disjuncture in the Son. What He did appear, that He also was. The Son 'did in these last days exhibit the similitude...assuming the ancient production [of His hands] into His own nature,' being 'made *a man among men* that He might join the end to the beginning, that is, man to God'.⁴¹ Against the Gnostics, Irenaeus rightly insists the Λόγος must become the Son of Adam to save the sons of Adam. But he claims still more. For the incarnate Son, born of the stock of His τύπος, assumes the likeness of His *own* eternal life, coming 'in the last times, to render the image like Himself'.⁴² As Other of the Father, He alone can assume flesh. Indeed He *must* do so. For He is the ἀρχή, both temporal beginning and ruling Head, who holds together the one οἰκονομία. Only He the Head can bring His copy to the goal. The incarnation belongs to the Son, against Rahner's Sabellian-like Trinity, where each Divine Person may freely assume flesh.⁴³ The Irenaeian picture 'utterly repudiates any utilitarian view of Jesus',⁴⁴ for it is the Son's intended glory.

³⁸ J.Ochagavia: *Visibile Patris Filius*, Rome: Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae, 1964, p90.

³⁹ Ochagavia: *Visibile*, p95.

⁴⁰ *Demonstration* §47, p71.

⁴¹ 4.33.4, p507, 4.20.3, p488, 2.22.4, 3.18.7.

⁴² *Demonstration* §22, p53-4.

⁴³ K.Rahner: 'Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise "De Trinitate"' in *Theological Investigations IV*, trans K.Smyth, London: DLT, 1966, p80.

⁴⁴ Farrow: 'St Irenaeus', p344.

The Incarnation of the Word is thus central to the accomplishment of the divine economy, and although perhaps conditioned by human apostasy, the Incarnation was certainly not occasioned by it. The goal of the economy is the manifestation of the glory of God in a fully living man, partaking of the life, incorruptibility, and glory of God.⁴⁵

The Son's movement towards σάρκωσις is thus never one of *external* compulsion, but is the love-compelled embrace of His creation, expressing in turn the love of the Father. For the unseen Father announces His love always in the Son; 'as regards His love, He is always known through Him by whose means He ordained all things...His Word, our Lord Jesus Christ'.⁴⁶ The Λόγος ἑνσαρκος reveals the costly love of Son and Father towards creation. In Gunton's words, 'the self-emptying of the eternal Son in the incarnation and passion is an expression of the love of the triune God worked out in the structures of fallen time and space'.⁴⁷ Moreover the incarnation speaks of Father and Son's love *for one-another*. For the Son as eternal Other of the Father is the implicit ground of all existence. Citing Pannenberg, 'the eternal Son is not merely the ontic basis of the existence of Jesus in his self-distinction from the Father as the one God; he is also the basis of the distinction and independent existence of all creaturely reality'.⁴⁸ Creation is 'other' to the Father in time, as the Son is His 'Other' from eternity. The incarnation is no Divine obligation to events 'outside' the Godhead. It is the unveiled publication of the Father and Son's mutual love and honouring of one-another, prompting Irenaeus on one occasion to employ the boldest Christological language, 'inasmuch as He had a pre-existence as a saving Being, *it was necessary that what might be saved should also be called into existence*, in order that the Being who saves should not exist in vain'.⁴⁹ The incarnation 'extends' outwards the love of Father and Son, to embrace and thus bring forth the whole creation. Jenson once more captures the Irenaeian mood, 'what in eternity precedes the Son's birth to Mary is not an unincarnate *state* of the Son, but a pattern of movement within the event of the Incarnation, the movement to Incarnation, as itself a pattern of God's triune life'.⁵⁰

This subtle distinction between Λόγος ἄσαρκος and ἑνσαρκος falsifies the view that sees *the incarnate One* as basis for creation (unless σάρκωσις is understood as the Son's logical maturation). So MacKenzie, failing to distinguish eternal Man from incarnate Son, mistakenly interprets the Irenaeian Adam as created according to the Word *made flesh*.⁵¹ Mary Donovan shares the sentiment, 'since the divine is by definition formless, and image as form requires a material substratum, the archetype of the image of God in us is the incarnate Son'.⁵² Moreover Farrow reads Irenaeus with a Barthian lens, when rightly seeking to defend Incarnation from the

⁴⁵ J.Behr: *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement*, Oxford: University Press, 2000, p60.

⁴⁶ 4.20.3, p488.

⁴⁷ Gunton: *Christ and Creation*, p88.

⁴⁸ Pannenberg: *Systematic Theology*, vol 2, p22-3. See chapter 2, footnote 56.

⁴⁹ 3.22.3, p455.

⁵⁰ R.Jenson: *Systematic Theology*, vol 1, p141.

⁵¹ MacKenzie: *Demonstration*, p107.

⁵² Mary A.Donovan: 'Alive to the Glory of God: a key insight in St Irenaeus', *TS*, vol 49, 1988, p283-297 [p294].

lapsarian trend of later fathers, he designates the *incarnate* One as ground of creation rather than means of its repair.⁵³ But if the Λόγος ἄσαρκος already espouses the concept of Man, supralapsarianism need not appeal to an eternally incarnate Christ. Irenaeus *does* avoid a lapsarian incarnation, thus preserving the importance of flesh, as Farrow rightly affirms. Yet his achievement rests not upon an eternal Λόγος ἔνσαρκος, but on an eternal Son moving *towards* enfleshment. Flesh is integral to man, because σάρκωσις is the τέλος of the Son. The Son's journey affirms flesh's future not as one of annihilation but transformation.

Σάρκωσις then belongs within the triune life. This need not mean Irenaeus collapses creation and fall into one-another (as sometimes claimed), simply that creation and fall relate *necessarily together* in the one economy. Since the project was always calling man to Divine likeness, the Son's incarnation prescribes man's maturing over and beyond Adam's fall,

It was necessary, at first, that nature should be exhibited; then, after that, that what was mortal should be conquered and swallowed up by immortality, and the corruptible by incorruptibility, and that man should be made after the image and likeness of God.⁵⁴

Indeed to interpret the incarnation as *consequential* to Eden's tragedy would be almost to repeat Gnostic doctrines of creation,⁵⁵ where an interventionist saviour-figure offers escape from a world seized by degradation and decay. Hughes for one risks the position, when he says 'the incarnation was not the capping or crowning of an incomplete structure; it was a rescue operation...a mediatorial mission, not a necessity in itself; a self-humbling, not a crowning'.⁵⁶ By contrast Irenaeus' Incarnation extends beyond the reversal of Adamic disobedience, to fulfil man's eschatological calling to Divine likeness. Only in the incarnation of the Man among men could Eden's ψυχικός become πνευματικός, could new life come from old.

What is manifestly clear is that only the eternal Word can effect the project, assuming flesh in order to redeem flesh, for no child of Adam can overthrow his forefather's mischief or escape the power of sin,

As it was not possible that the man who had once for all been conquered, and who had been destroyed through disobedience, could reform himself, and obtain the prize of victory; and as it was also impossible that he could attain to salvation who had fallen under the power of sin, the Son effected both these things, being the Word of God, descending from the Father, becoming incarnate, stooping low, even to death, and consummating the arranged plan of salvation.⁵⁷

⁵³ Farrow: *Ascension*, p111-12.

⁵⁴ 4.38.4, p522.

⁵⁵ M.Reeves: 'When is man?' chap 3, 'The Glory of God', Postgraduate Thesis, London: King's College, 2002, p48.

⁵⁶ Hughes: *True Image*, p14. Rather better is Westcott's claim (to which Hughes takes offence), 'looking to the incarnation as the crown of creation we have found the true centre of the system in which we are set to work', (*Christus Consummator*, London: Macmillan&Co, 1886, p109).

⁵⁷ 3.18.2, p446.

This Son of man must both surpass yet remain a Son of Adam, for ‘how could He have subdued the devil who was stronger than man unless He had been greater than vanquished man?’⁵⁸ His κένωσις is not the *abrogation* of Divine attributes. Rather Irenaeus predates Barthian assertions that ‘God is always God even in His humiliation...He humbled Himself, but He did not do it by ceasing to be Who He is’.⁵⁹ The assumption of flesh crowned in the obedience of death is actually an experience of πλήρωσις, an act of *fulfilment*, the Son assuming what He did not have, that He might recapitulate the copy of His eternal Self.

Central to redemption is that *the eternal Word assumes the flesh of Adam*. Only then can Adam’s children rejoice in His labours. All aspects of ἀνακεφαλαίωσις require real union between Man of heaven and man of dust. Indeed the theme of Christ’s real humanity is of such paramount importance to Irenaeus that Brunner claimed no theologian before Luther took *vere Homo* so seriously.⁶⁰ The bishop certainly highlights the parallels between both men, affirming ‘*flesh* is that which was of old formed for Adam by God out of the dust, and it is this that John...declared the Word of God became’.⁶¹ The Lord was no Gnostic phantom, man only in appearance, bluffing the public whilst enacting his part, ‘but an actual being of flesh and blood,’⁶² able to secure the redemption of *our* flesh and blood. Thus despite earlier Christophanic appearances, recapitulation requires Incarnation. He must become בן־אדם to save the sons of Adam, summing up our forefather’s history in reverse, retelling the story as it ought to be, through the course of His own perfect life, as the reigning powers of sin and death are defeated through His own Adamic obedience. For He is the Offspring of Eve, whose ‘work of recapitulation summed up all things, both waging war against our enemy, and crushing him who had at the beginning led us away captives in Adam, and trampled upon his head’.⁶³

Advancing in wisdom and stature, the incarnate Son renews old humanity from within, sanctifying every stage of human life,

Not despising or evading any condition of humanity, nor setting aside in Himself that law which He had appointed for the human race, but sanctifying every age, by that period corresponding to it which belonged to Himself.⁶⁴

Against the Gnostic claim that Christ ministered only one year, Irenaeus insists,

He...passed through every age, becoming an infant for infants, thus sanctifying infants; a child for children, thus sanctifying those who are of this age...a youth for youths,

⁵⁸ 4.33.4, p507, *Demonstration* §31.

⁵⁹ Barth: *Church Dogmatics* 4/1, p179ff.

⁶⁰ Brunner: *Mediator*, p328.

⁶¹ 1.9.3, p329. Irenaeus’ comprehensive theology of Incarnation prevents a minimalist reading of ‘flesh’ as ‘body’.

⁶² 2.22.6, p392, 2.22.4, 4.34.4.

⁶³ 5.21.1, p548, 3.18.6-7, 4.33.4, 4.40.3, 5.1.2. The symmetry extends further, ‘as through a disobedient virgin man was struck and...died, so also by means of a virgin who obeyed the word of God, man...received life’ (*Dem* §33 p61).

⁶⁴ 2.22.4, p391.

becoming an example to youths...so likewise He was an old man for old men, that He might be a perfect Master of all, not merely as respects the setting forth of the truth, but also as regards age.⁶⁵

The theme echoes Hebrews' language concerning the 'perfecting' of the incarnate Son, as He learns obedience to the cross.⁶⁶ However Irenaeus perhaps does overreact to Gnostic curtailments of Jesus' ministry, as when his exposition of John 8:56-8 accords Christ the honourably advanced age of near fifty, when the Jews disparage His wisdom over against the perceived maturity of a retired Levitical priest.⁶⁷ Moreover the decision to stretch ἀνακεφαλαιώσασις to this degree risks forgetting that all humanity is *already* included in Christ's recapitulation of Adam (Genesis 2:22-3, Romans 5:12, Acts 17:26). Recapitulation need not compel Christ to experience *every* human situation, lest He face the perpetual charge of failing to represent our own *particular* experience. Rather, recapitulation requires Christ to assume and perfect the life of the *first* man, from whom we all derive. In addition, the bishop sees a further (less biblically defined) purpose to Christ's maturation. It is an act of Divine accommodation, a concession to humanity's need for gradual revelation, that man might be accustomed to receive Him,

It was for this reason that the Son of God, although He was perfect, passed through the state of infancy in common with the rest of mankind, partaking of it thus *not for His own benefit*, but for that of the infantile stage of man's existence, in order that man might be able to receive Him.⁶⁸

Christ's transfiguration, the unveiling of His all-surpassing glory beyond the disciples' comprehension, warrants the claim. Yet the 'perfecting' theme we might say is also for *His* benefit. The incarnate Son *learns* obedience, growing in wisdom and favour with God and man, that He might become the ἀρχηγός and τελειωτής of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). Lifelong maturing leads ultimately to the obedience of death. Golgotha, recapitulating the shedding of prophetic blood throughout history, brings atonement precisely because He is the Son of Adam; 'nor did He truly redeem us by His own blood, if He did not really become man'.⁶⁹

Fervent Gnostic denial of Incarnation impels Irenaeus to expound it thoroughly, challenging a present-day church often neglectful of the virgin conception. There exists in contemporary quarters a Gnostic-like supposition that Jesus appears human, without thoughtful engagement upon His assumption of flesh, a tendency to speak of 'God sending Jesus to die on a cross', which effectively bypasses the need for Incarnation. Irenaeus masterfully discloses the flaws of this truncated gospel. For the Son's assumption of full Adamic life is requisite to salvation. Gnostic actors of the human part are vacuous saviours. Christ *had* to take our flesh, for 'if the

⁶⁵ 2.22.4, p391 [Luke 2:51-2].

⁶⁶ Hebrews 2:10, 5:8, 9:14 [Philippians 2:8].

⁶⁷ 2.22.6, priests ministered from 30-50 years [Numbers 4].

⁶⁸ Italics mine, 4.38.2, p521.

⁶⁹ 5.2.1, p528, 5.14.1.

Lord had taken flesh from another substance, He would not...have reconciled that one to God which had become inimical through transgression'.⁷⁰ The Son of God indwells humanity precisely where His enemy had a foothold, breaking Satan's grip through His own perfect obedience, 'indeed the enemy would not have been fairly vanquished, unless it had been a man [born] of a woman who conquered him'.⁷¹ Adam's calling to earthly dominion belongs to the Word *made flesh*. Salvation comes *from within* the old order.

The incarnation therefore originates a new creation. In the virgin's womb dwells a new humanity continuous with Adam yet not constrained by sin. Within this belly of the old world,⁷² the Son 'showed forth a new [kind of] generation; that as by the former generation we inherited death, so by this new generation we might inherit life'.⁷³ Incarnation marks an indispensable new beginning, for 'how shall...(man) escape from the generation subject to death, *if not by means of a new generation*, given in a wonderful and unexpected manner...by God – that regeneration which flows from the virgin through faith?'⁷⁴ The incarnate Son is the new humanity, since 'God has willed that the restored creation should take form in, and in relation to, one man',⁷⁵ who is the true Image and likeness of God. Christ becomes the ἀρχή of new creation, the last Adam fashioned afresh by the Spirit in a womb, a second בְּרֵאשִׁית renewing creation from within. This new humanity cannot be *ex nihilo* but must be *ex Maria*, establishing continuity with the first Adamic creation, confirming the eschatological hope as the *renovation and renewal* (καινός not νέος) of the original handiwork of God. Of noteworthy relevance to our discussion, the incarnation brings the harmonious union of flesh and Spirit (Luke 1:35), as the Spirit of God overshadows the virgin's womb to inaugurate the recreation of this fallen world. And in Jesus Christ the Spirit *indwells* human life, promising in anticipation that flesh will be redeemed. The Spirit of life, who in the Divine foetus fashions the growth of new creation from the womb of the old, secures the redemption of flesh.

The sinlessness of this Word made flesh, ever obedient to the Father, is not in doubt.⁷⁶ Nonetheless one might still ask *what kind* of flesh the Son assumed. Apollinarian inclination to Docetism is rightly denounced by Gregory Nazianzen's celebrated maxim 'for that which he has not assumed he has not healed'.⁷⁷ But does this leave Christ assuming Adam's *sinful* flesh? Extending Gregory's maxim, the 19th century Scottish theologian Edward Irving claimed 'that

⁷⁰ 5.14.3, p542, 5.14.2.

⁷¹ 5.21.1, p549.

⁷² בֶּטֶן (LXX: κοιλία) conveys both 'womb' and 'earth's belly' (Genesis 30:2, Isaiah 46:3, Matthew 12:40).

⁷³ 5.1.3, p527, 3.10.2.

⁷⁴ Italics mine, 4.33.4, p507, 3.18.1.

⁷⁵ O'Donovan: *Resurrection*, p150.

⁷⁶ Hebrews 4:15, 7:26, John 8:46.

⁷⁷ Gregory Nazianzen: 'To Cledonius the Priest Against Apollinarius' in *NPNF*, 2nd series, vol VII, ed Schaff/Wace, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974, p440.

Christ took our fallen nature is most manifest, because there was no other in existence to take'.⁷⁸ The foetus in Mary's womb belongs to creation in *all* its fallenness, 'as unfallen creation stood represented in unfallen Adam, so fallen creation stood represented in Christ'.⁷⁹ The eternal Word assumes flesh as representative sample of the *infected* whole, engaging victoriously with the powers of evil by the effective agency of the Spirit. The new beginning is one of *sinful* flesh perfected by a new obedience in the Spirit, proclaiming this Christ as prototypically human. To challenge Irving's analysis is often to be tarred with the docetic brush, as when Weinandy says, 'to rely solely on the Son's divinity as the source of holiness within the humanity of Jesus borders on Docetism'.⁸⁰ Yet Irving is effectively distinguishing 'Person' and 'nature' in Christ, opening himself to charges of Nestorianism, since Christ's human nature participates in the *fallenness* of creation (sinful flesh), whilst His Person never sins because of the Spirit. The view has widespread appeal. Cranfield amongst others maintains a fallen race needs a fallen redeemer, 'the Son of God assumed *the self-same fallen human nature that is ours*, but that in His case that fallen human nature was never the whole of Him'.⁸¹ Similarly Weinandy argues that if Jesus is not like us in *fallenness*, His 'identity with us becomes little more than a legal fiction', since 'only as the Son inherited an enfeebled humanity does his sinless life possess any soteriological value'.⁸² Whilst von Balthasar claims that Jesus' *sinful* humanity is the vital bond between incarnation and cross, as the Son suffers the penalty for humanity's sinful condition.⁸³ It is however difficult to see on such understanding how Jesus could ever act *for us* in atoning sacrifice, rather than simply stand *with us* in sin.

Irenaeus has certainly been read through this broad lens. MacKenzie maintains 'the Word takes...Adamic, that is fallen flesh'.⁸⁴ Whilst Minns, confusing flesh with corporeality, fails to perceive Irenaeus connections between first and last Adam.⁸⁵ But the bishop's Christology does not uphold Irving's distinction of person and nature. The Word recapitulates *created* Adam, Adam 'εν ἀρχῇ, not fallen Adam. Christ reverses the story beginning in Eden before the growth of thorns and thistles. Indeed recapitulation would be incomplete had Christ not shared Adam's nature before sin; the story in reverse would begin outside the Garden. Rather, the Adamic link [and thus Christ's link to all humanity] is best preserved when Christ like Adam enters the world with a sinless human nature, not simply *ex Maria* but also *ex Spirito*. His subsequent obedience becomes the point of distinction from Adam, as He truly lives out the union of His Person and nature. So Paul describes Christ in Romans 8:3 as sent ἐν ὁμοιώματι σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας, in a human nature real and sinless simultaneously, the humanity Adam enjoyed before

⁷⁸ E.Irving: *The Collected Writings of Edward Irving*, vol 5, ed G.Carlyle, London: Alexander Strahan, 1865, p115.

⁷⁹ Gunton: *Atonement*, p134.

⁸⁰ T.Weinandy: *In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993, p59.

⁸¹ Italics mine. C.Cranfield: *Romans, A Shorter Commentary*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985 [Romans 8:3], p177.

⁸² Weinandy: *Likeness*, p38, 45.

⁸³ H.Urs von Balthasar: *Mysterium Paschale*, trans A.Nichols, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990, p11-41.

⁸⁴ MacKenzie: *Irenaeus*, p156.

⁸⁵ Minns: *Irenaeus*, p88-9.

his infantile Fall. Christ can subsequently choose to lay down His life, only to take it again (John 10:17-18), a choice no longer His were He born of sinful flesh. Neither does this threaten the intensity of Christ's temptation. Temptation after all remains powerfully real for sinless flesh, as is clear from Adam's garden fall. Recapitulation requires Christ to assume *sinless* flesh. Here is a new humanity, ontologically pure by the Spirit, its sinlessness both maintained and matured throughout the experience of the obedient Son.

In fact the incarnate Word does more than recount Eden's tragedy in reverse. Recapitulation (Latin 'caput') is the *re-ordering* of creation into its Head, the eschatological accomplishment of בְּ-רֵאשִׁית, where all things fashioned and sustained by Christ are reconstituted to Him who (literally) exemplifies the hope of man. The Λόγος ἔνσαρκος does not strictly *reverse* history. He brings progression, maturation, transformation of this order. Torrance describes it thus,

'Recapitulation' means that redemptive activity of God in Jesus Christ was not just a transcendent act that touched our existence in space and time at one point, but *an activity that passed into our existence* and is at work within it, penetrating back to the beginning...and reaching forward to the consummation...thus connecting the end with the beginning.⁸⁶

In Adam the human creation is enslaved to sin and corruption. But once the Son takes flesh, 'the relationship is reordered and renewed: redirected to its original and eschatological destiny',⁸⁷ as the true Image achieves the obedient life the infant never could. Adam needs Christ to display the Image truly, and so accomplish the calling. A momentous Irenaean quotation captures the centrality of Incarnation to the Divine project,

For in times long past, it was *said* that man was created after the image of God, but it was not [actually] *shown*; for the Word was as yet invisible, after whose image was man created, Wherefore also he did easily lose the similitude. When, however, the Word of God became flesh, He confirmed both these: for He both showed forth the image truly, since He became Himself what was His image; and He re-established the similitude after a sure manner, by assimilating man to the invisible Father through means of the visible Word.⁸⁸

In Eden man readily lost the resemblance of Christ. Yet once the Image comes in flesh, Adam's children *see* their calling fulfilled. Only then can humanity attain the τέλος; to be perfected *after Him*, even as He Himself is perfected in flesh. Only then is Ephesians 1:10 complete (ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ).

Irenaeus expands our doctrine of Incarnation. Most notably he defines anthropology not simply by the incarnate, but by the *eternal* Christ. The Word is the eternally anointed Man of heaven, whose movement to incarnation is the crowning of His Being as well as the means of redeeming

⁸⁶ Italics mine, Torrance: *Divine Meaning*, p121.

⁸⁷ Gunton: *Atonement*, p169.

⁸⁸ 5.16.2, p544.

Adam His copy. Only Christ the true Man can recount the true human story, inaugurating by the Spirit a new generation from the old order, and maturing Adamic life by His obedience to the Father. His perfecting enables our perfecting, embodying before time the eschatological hope of Adam's children, the union of flesh and Spirit.

The Word as Union of God and Man

In the richness of Irenaeian Christology, we have begun to see the Word made flesh as *embodiment of the cosmic project*. The one Lord Jesus Christ, who reveals both the Father and true Manhood, exhibits in His incarnation the intimate *union* of God and Man, personifying in His life the hope of creation, the promise of עֲמֻנָא-ל. Indeed one may suggest this profession of God and Man united in the one Lord extends even the confines of the future Chalcedon. For not only does Irenaeus preach the bipolar homoousion,⁸⁹ where Christ as one Person is true God and true Man, 'made known in two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation'.⁹⁰ He also presents God and man in fellowship *with one-another*, modelling in His own incarnate life the projected τέλος for creation. The universal project is embodied in Him who is the union of God and Man, where the qualities of both natures are *enhypostasized*, that is particularised in the one Person. By contrast, Gnosticism's separation of 'Jesus' and 'Christ' denies real fellowship between Divine and human; both remain eternally fractured from one-another. There is no assumption of human nature, since 'according to the opinion of no one of the heretics was the Word of God made flesh'.⁹¹ The earthly is simply engulfed by the Divine, 'Jesus was merely a receptacle of Christ, upon whom the Christ, as a dove, descended from above'.⁹² Gnostic σάρξ means simply Jesus *appearing* as visible man, assuming a body requisite for the Logos' saving dispensation. There is no personal communion with human nature, no knowledge of Adamic frailty (Hebrews 4:15).

Irenaeus answers with the testimony of John; the eternal Word σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν (John 1:14). The Saviour knows no rupture in His Being. He is not born the man 'Jesus', complete in later baptism on reception of the 'Christ'. Rather, Jesus *Christ* comes in the flesh, the eternal Son of God born of a woman, whose hunger, weariness, weeping and suffering confirms Him as Son of Adam.⁹³ Gospel accounts of His birth, life and death expose the Gnostic lie, as when Irenaeus rhetorically asks,

⁸⁹ T.J.Gorringe: "Not Assumed is not Healed": the Homoousion and Liberation Theology,' *SJOT*, vol 38, 1985, p481-90 [p482].

⁹⁰ Kelly: *Doctrines*, p340, quoting Chalcedon.

⁹¹ 3.11.3, p427.

⁹² 3.16.1, p440.

⁹³ 3.16.3 (Romans 1:2-5, 9:5, Galatians 4:4-5), 3.22.2, 4.33.4 (Matthew 12:41-2, 22:43). So Matthew sees *Christ's* birth fulfil the promise of an eternal Davidic king (3.16.2: Matthew 1:18, Psalm 132:11).

Why did He acknowledge Himself to be the Son of man, if he had not gone through that birth which belongs to a human being? And how again supposing that He was not flesh, but was a man merely in appearance, could He have been crucified, and could blood and water have issued from His pierced side?⁹⁴

Instead the Son of God made Son of man has ‘testimony from all that He was very man, and...very God, from the Father, from the Spirit, from angels, from the creation itself, from men, from apostate spirits and demons, from the enemy, and last of all, from death itself’.⁹⁵ The Word made flesh *is* the dwelling of God with men, since in Him God and man are bound and live together. Or as Barth would later say, ‘as He lives, divine and human self-realization occur together as one event’.⁹⁶ Jesus Christ embodies the project of creation.

Consequently Irenaean Christology mistrusts a demarcation between Christ’s ‘natures’, which tends to disengage ‘human’ and ‘Divine’ in the Son by attributing experiences to one or other, leaving the true Jesus Christ somewhat elusive. To say with Chalcedon that both natures relate to one-another through the one Person hardly resolves the question. The tendency to dis sever both natures risks for example fashioning only the *human* Jesus as the locus of suffering, authorizing a possible dichotomy in His Person, with close resemblance to the Gnostic Aeons Irenaeus was so passionately refuting. Irenaeus is no pre-Apollinarian, who sees the Divine Word substitute for the normal human psychology of Christ. Nor would he concur with John Owen that Christ’s human nature is *αὐτοκίνητος*, a self-determining spiritual principle where only the Spirit mediates between ‘human’ and ‘Divine’ in Jesus, ensuring the Logos never relates *directly* to Adamic life.⁹⁷ Rather, there is real continuity of Christ’s human soul with His Divine consciousness, a *communicatio idiomatum* where Christ’s humanity retains Divine attributes as much as His Divinity retains the human. Much closer to the bishop would be Cyril of Alexandria, who understands Christ’s humanity as a concrete existent ‘nature-hypostasis’ always belonging to the Word, an indissoluble union where each nature participates in the properties of the other, ‘we must therefore confess that the Word has imparted the glory of the divine operation to His own flesh, while at the same time taking to Himself what belongs to the flesh’.⁹⁸ Lawson thus misrepresents Irenaeus with the claim that during Christ’s temptation the Logos was temporarily inactive. Elsewhere, tarnishing the bishop’s Christology with a Eutychian brush, he says ‘Irenaeus can see the human and divine blending in a new Being’.⁹⁹ Rather the bishop sees all Divine and human manifestations proceed from the one Person, with

⁹⁴ 4.33.2 (John 19:34), p507.

⁹⁵ 4.6.7, p469.

⁹⁶ Barth: *Church Dogmatics* 4/3, p40ff.

⁹⁷ A.Spence: ‘Christ’s Humanity and Ours: John Owen’ in *Persons*, ed Gunton, p74-97.

⁹⁸ Cyril of Alexandria: *de Incarnatione unigeni*, quoted in Kelly: *Doctrines*, p322, from J.P.Migne, *Patrologia Graecae* (p75, 1241).

⁹⁹ Italics mine, Lawson: *Irenaeus*, p15.

no alteration between Divine and human functions in the Redeemer, 'the effect of the two natures is concurrent'.¹⁰⁰ Wingren captures the spirit well,

If we were to insist on his providing us with a clear definition of Christ's divinity as distinct from His humanity, we should be forcing him into the position of having to set Christ's divinity and humanity over against one another in order to give a sufficiently clear answer to our question, in so doing destroying *what is central to his theology*.¹⁰¹

It is in this light we should understand Irenaeus' following words,

For as He became man in order to undergo temptation, so also was He the Word that He might be glorified; the Word remaining quiescent, that He might be capable of being tempted, dishonoured, crucified, and of suffering death, but the human nature being swallowed up in it (the divine), when it conquered, and endured [without yielding], and performed acts of kindness, and rose again, and was received up [into heaven].¹⁰²

This is no adoptionist concession to Gnosticism's splintering of 'Jesus' and 'Christ', human and Divine. Rather, the one Lord Jesus Christ recapitulates Adam as the obedient Man under the law, redeeming His fragile copy from within. The language simply conveys the Christological pattern of self-humbling before exaltation, the apostolic teaching of the Son of God made flesh, learning the way of obedience to death, before the Father exalts Him over all the earth as Son-of-God-in-power through His resurrection-ascension.¹⁰³

Irenaeus therefore offers an important counterweight to the Nestorian tendencies of a Calvinist Christology, which at times appears to echo the Gnostic dislocation of Divine and human. For Calvin disassociates 'human' and 'Divine' in the Son, as when he attributes John 8:58 to Jesus' Divinity, and Luke 2:52, John 8:50, Mark 13:32 to His humanity.¹⁰⁴ Wendel's biography mentions the trend,

If we place ourselves at the point of view of Christological doctrine, we may...wonder whether, by thus accentuating the distinction between the two natures, he did not endanger the fundamental unity of the person of Christ, and whether some of the affirmations he made would not tend towards somewhat unorthodox conclusions.¹⁰⁵

For Irenaeus by contrast the Word made flesh *is* the living communion of God and man, where the union of both natures in the one Person constitutes the Divine/human history.¹⁰⁶ At the incarnation God passes into man, establishing the hope of man's eternal share in God's triune life, as both coinhere without confusion in the incarnate Christ. For the Son is both Image of the

¹⁰⁰ Prestige: *Fathers*, p160.

¹⁰¹ Wingren: *Incarnation*, p100-1.

¹⁰² 3.19.3, p449.

¹⁰³ 3.16.3, Galatians 4:4, Romans 1:4, Philippians 2:6-9, Hebrews 2:9, Acts 2:22-4.

¹⁰⁴ Calvin: *Institutes*, 2.14.1-2.

¹⁰⁵ F.Wendel: *Calvin: the origins and development of his religious thought*, trans P.Mairet, London: Collins, 1976, p225.

¹⁰⁶ Similarly Jenson on Barth, 'one almost wants to say without qualification: it is the history **between** the two natures of Christ' (*Alpha*, p130).

Father and Pattern after whom Adam was formed, the manifestation of God and the revelation of all man is destined to be. He is the offer of Divine fellowship, 'propitiating indeed for us the Father against whom we had sinned',¹⁰⁷ and securing our freedom from orphanage by calling 'man back again to communion with God, that by this communion with Him we may receive participation in incorruptibility'.¹⁰⁸

In this one Lord Jesus Christ, man and God learn to fellowship with one-another, advancing the project in keeping with the Father's will; 'the Word of God...dwelt in man, and became the Son of man, *that He might accustom man to receive God, and God to dwell in man*, according to the good pleasure of the Father'.¹⁰⁹ In anticipation of Barth, it is in Christ that 'the revealing of God and the understanding of man fully coincided, the whole Word of God and the perfect response of man were indivisibly united in one Person, the Mediator'.¹¹⁰ It is He who fulfils both hypostatic and atoning union in His one Person. To rebuff this communion of God and man, as Irenaeus makes abundantly clear, is to remain in Adam, enslaved to the old creation, casting away 'the inheritance of the flesh'.¹¹¹ For those 'who despise the incarnation of the pure generation of the Word of God defraud human nature of promotion into God'.¹¹² For them there is no new creation drawn from the old, no hope of salvation. Incorruptibility and immortality must commingle with Adam's posterity for the corruptible to be consumed by incorruptibility, the mortal by immortality.

Construed positively, the incarnation preaches the eligibility of flesh for salvation. Put simply, 'if the flesh were not in a position to be saved, the Word of God would in no wise have become flesh'.¹¹³ Yet in Christ's real humanity 'the righteous flesh has reconciled that flesh which was being kept under bondage in sin, and brought it into friendship with God'.¹¹⁴ The obedient Christ confirms Adamic life need not be in enmity with the Father. Purified flesh may, indeed *does* belong to the new creation. Redemption entails not the Divine *denial* of flesh, but precisely the Son's *obedient* flesh. In Him comes the promised redemption of *our* flesh.

¹⁰⁷ 5.17.1, p544, 3.18.1, *Demonstration* §31.

¹⁰⁸ *Demonstration* §40, p65.

¹⁰⁹ Italics mine, 3.20.2, p450.

¹¹⁰ T.Torrance: *The Mediation of Christ*, Exeter: Paternoster, 1983, p19.

¹¹¹ 3.22.1, p454, 4.33.5.

¹¹² 3.19.1, p448, 5.1.3.

¹¹³ 5.14.1, p541.

¹¹⁴ 5.14.2 (Colossians 1:21-2), p541.

Perfecting Adamic Flesh

The Λόγος ἑνσαρκος as the revelation of the Father and of true Manhood, the union of God and man, is not without the Spirit. On the contrary, the Spirit supremely rests upon *the Christ*,¹¹⁵ sanctifying flesh drawn from the virgin's womb (contra Roman Catholicism's 'immaculate conception'), and fashioning the Λόγος ἑνσαρκος as first Man of a new creation. According Divine breath to Adam, He brings to birth the last Adam to share the first man's flesh. Thus in the virgin's womb the Spirit begins the *renewal* of Adamic life, prolonging and perfecting flesh, through the lifelong obedience of the Son of God made Son of man. The Spirit empowers the retelling of Adam's story. Gnostic thought by contrast invariably denies the Spirit's ministry in the human conception of Jesus Christ. In starkly Adoptionist terms, 'Jesus' awaits the empowering of the Aeon 'Christ', in what is a mere joining of disparate aeons for a limited time.¹¹⁶ Gnosticism boasts no dynamic doctrine of the Spirit.

Irenaeus we have mentioned presents Jesus' baptism as the declaration of His *eternal* anointing. He does not become what He was not. Rather that which He was, He was declared to be. His baptism *publicly* presents Him as Anointed of the Father, whose incarnate life unites the Spirit with Adamic flesh, 'therefore did the Spirit of God descend upon Him, [the Spirit] of Him who had promised by the prophets that He would anoint Him, so that we, receiving from the abundance of His unction, might be saved'.¹¹⁷ This is the public profession of Psalm 45:7-8, when the Father anointing His Son with the oil of gladness exalts Him over His fellows, promising Him the throne of the everlasting Kingdom. Baptised at thirty, He is 'the full age of a Master', the High Priest marked with the heavenly oil of the Spirit.¹¹⁸ Christ's baptism does not deny Jesus' *eternal* unction. In fact to claim Jesus only received the Spirit at His baptism would be to propound a typical Gnosticism, where the Son is denied His eternal mediation of the Father's will. Instead, baptism becomes both the Father's public declaration of His Son's Messianic ministry as chosen Priest-King, *and* the Son's consecration to the Servant's task, including the coming 'baptism' of death,¹¹⁹ in assurance of the Psalm 2 promise of eternal rule.

¹¹⁵ Isaiah 11:2ff, 42:1ff, 61:1ff, John 1:32-3.

¹¹⁶ 1.15.3, 1.30.13, 3.17.4.

¹¹⁷ 3.9.3, p423. The Father declares Him Anointed One to the world (Matthew 3:16-17, Mark 1:10-11, Luke 3:21-2, John 1:32-4).

¹¹⁸ 2.22.4, p391, *Demonstration* §47, 3.9.3, 3.18.3. Mentioning Jesus' age [Luke 3:21-23], Luke alludes to the beginning of a Levitical priest's ministry (Numbers 4).

¹¹⁹ Ferguson: *Holy Spirit*, p45-6, Cullmann: *Christology*, p66 [Numbers 4:3, Isaiah 42:1-6, 49:8, Psalm 2:7, Mark 10:38-9, Acts 10:38].

By the Spirit the Christ performs miracles. The incarnate Son becomes His newfound dwelling, as the Spirit empowers the Saviour throughout His lifelong Filial obedience,

For as the ark [of the covenant] was gilded within and without with pure gold, so was also the body of Christ pure and resplendent; for it was adorned within by the Word, and shielded without by the Spirit, in order that from both [materials] the splendour of the natures might be clearly shown forth.¹²⁰

The sevenfold Spirit rests upon the Son of God, the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge and reverent fear, a gift from the Father to His chosen Servant.¹²¹ Similarly Basil would say, 'but when we speak of the dispensations made for man by our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ...all is through the Spirit', whilst Calvin maintains 'the Spirit has chosen Christ as His seat, that from Him might abundantly flow the heavenly riches of which we are in such need'.¹²² This is not to claim with Irving that the Spirit enables the Son to bear *sinful* flesh from the virgin, purifying and offering it perfected to the Father. Irenaeus would read Gnostic overtones in such division of Person and nature. Rather, the eternal anointing of the Word culminates with His enfleshment, as the Spirit sanctifies the flesh assumed, enabling the Word to mature this sanctified Adamic life through the course of Incarnation. In the Spirit's power, the Son lives as Man under the Law, exhausting the devil's attacks with His Father's word. Spurning evil, He completes 'a work of triumphal obedience',¹²³ exposing sin as a fundamental *distortion* of true humanity, as He the High Priest realizes 'the τελείωσις through His whole life until the final sacrifice of His voluntary death'.¹²⁴ This dynamic interrelation of Son and Spirit means that recapitulation, in Farrow's words, 'is not a solo performance'.¹²⁵

In mighty triumph amidst temptation, the Spirit-filled Man unmasks the deceiver as inaugural liar and empties him of his power, 'the Word of God...the Maker of all things, conquering him by means of human nature, and showing him to be an apostate, has, on the contrary, put him under the power of man'.¹²⁶ He who had conquered Adam in Eden was himself taken captive by the last Adam. The devil thus defeated becomes the *vanquished* foe of Adam's race. Satan's defeat then reverberates throughout Christ's Spirit-filled ministry, as the Word overcomes evil's power to subject creation to captive futility. In Gunton's words, 'the healings and exorcisms are part of a process in which human life is seen and made whole'.¹²⁷ Conquering Satan, the Son of God made Son of man establishes true earthly dominion, accomplishing Adam's call to nurture creation's fruitfulness. For He is the true Man yielding proper increase,¹²⁸ bringing proleptic

¹²⁰ Fragment VIII, p570, 2.28.7, *Demonstration* §26 [Matthew 12:28, Luke 11:20].

¹²¹ *Demonstration* §7, p46, 3.12.7 [Isaiah 11:2-3].

¹²² Basil: *On The Holy Spirit*, §16.39, p25 and Calvin: *Institutes* 2.15.5, p500.

¹²³ MacKenzie: *Irenaeus*, p178.

¹²⁴ Cullmann: *Christology*, p93. The sinlessness of Jesus is often affirmed [Hebrews 4:15, 7:26, 9:14, 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Peter 1:19, 2:22-3, 3:18, John 7:18, 8:46, 14:30].

¹²⁵ Farrow: 'St Irenaeus', p345.

¹²⁶ 5.24.4, p553, 3.23.1, 5.22.1-2, 5.24.1-3.

¹²⁷ Luke 10:18, 13:16, John 16:33, 19:30, Revelation 5:5, 12:7-8 (Gunton: *Atonement*, p76).

¹²⁸ Farrow: *Ascension*, p52.

freedom to every form of cosmic slavery, through healings, casting out demons, calming wind and waves and multiplying the produce of the earth. Creation is representatively healed in advance of final healing, freed from bondage to decay in anticipation of eschatological fruitfulness.¹²⁹

Perhaps most relevantly to our question, the Spirit-filled Man unites the Spirit with the fleshly line of Adam, as the Spirit abiding in the incarnate Christ learns to indwell and transform humanity into the Image of the eschatological Man,

Wherefore He did also descend upon the Son of God, made the Son of mān, becoming accustomed in fellowship with Him to dwell in the human race, to rest with human beings, and to dwell in the workmanship of God, working the will of the Father in them, and renewing them from their old habits into the newness of Christ.¹³⁰

The prophets had announced the communion of God and man, anticipating the Word made flesh. And with the coming of the incarnate Son, the Spirit Himself resides in flesh, as the Christ experiences every stage of human life. The indwelling Spirit proclaims the true Man, who models the project of creation. For now in Him Creator and created coalesce, the Son ‘mixing and blending the Spirit of God the Father with the handiwork of God...that man might be according to the image and likeness of God’.¹³¹ The τέλος of Genesis 1:26 is representatively fulfilled as the Spirit indwells the Christ, ‘par l’incarnation, la chair s’accoutume à vivre avec l’Esprit’,¹³² that through incarnation and resurrection the Son might be declared ‘Man’ as He was destined to be.¹³³ In Him the Father confirms we too may be Spirit-filled, ‘God fitting Himself in His Word to our estate, that our estate may become the bearer of the Holy Spirit’.¹³⁴ True humanity means possessing the Spirit, realized in the incarnate Christ, ἄνθρωπος πνευματικός, in Whom alone is Adam’s hope.

The Obedience of Death

Irenaeus soteriology therefore envisages a *mutual* relation between Son and Spirit. As the incarnate Son perfects Adamic life in the Spirit’s power, so the Spirit in the Son learns to indwell and possess Adam’s Offspring. For the Spirit who drives Christ to face the devil’s temptations,¹³⁵ also empowers Christ to consummate His obedience in atoning death. The Son

¹²⁹ A theme particularly strong in Mark (Gunton: *Triune Creator*, p22, 221, *Christ and Creation*, p47). Demons for example are tormented ‘πρὸ καιροῦ’ (Matthew 8:29).

¹³⁰ 3.17.1, p444.

¹³¹ *Demonstration* §97, p100.

¹³² Benoît: *Irenée*, p230.

¹³³ ‘The strangeness of the human Jesus holds a mirror before us; it is an exemplary strangeness, for it tells us what God’s intentions are for each of us’, Hoekema: *God’s Image*, p73.

¹³⁴ MacKenzie, *Irenaeus*, p105.

¹³⁵ Matthew 4:1, Mark 1:12, Luke 4:1.

offers Himself blameless to the Father διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου (Hebrews 9:14), in an obedience exemplified at the Cross. The Spirit equips the true Man to complete His work of atonement, inaugurating through Him the renewed hope of creation. This *mutual* relation between Son and Spirit unmasks the vacuity of a Gnosticism where the 'Christ/Spirit' Aeon, naturally impassible, leaves 'Jesus' before the crucifixion,¹³⁶ ensuring that the schizophrenic saviour knows no spiritual suffering. Pain afflicts only the fleshly. Divine and human never meet in the work of redemption.

Irenaeus is rightly adamant that faith in such a saviour is ruinous faith. The one Lord Jesus Christ must know *real* suffering. Christ's Deity does not minimize, but rather intensifies His conflict. In Wingren's words, 'the agony which He has to endure was not easier than ours because of His Godhood, but more terrible than any other man has suffered'.¹³⁷ For the recapitulation of Adam *required* Christ to taste Adam's death, before transforming flesh to life, 'by summing up in Himself the whole human race from the beginning to the end, He has also summed up its death'.¹³⁸ Moreover Christ's authentic suffering underpins not only the *via salutis*, but also the call to Christian discipleship. Since if Christ Himself had relinquished suffering, He could not easily command His disciples to take up *their* cross. Had Christ not truly suffered, He would have misled both apostles and Church, 'by exhorting us to endure what He did not endure Himself'.¹³⁹ To fake His own suffering (as Gnostics claim) would be to mock the age-long experience of a suffering Church, modelled with fierce intensity in the bishop's own late second century martyrdom.

Golgotha cannot be wrenched from the Saviour's lifelong ministry, as Gnostics would like. Instead the cross culminates the incarnate Son's lifelong obedience to His Father. Recalling Paul's words to Philippi, He who became ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων humbled Himself μέχρι θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ (Philippians 2:6-8). The cross seals the Son's obedience, bringing to fullness Christ's victory in the wilderness, as 'Jesus offers to the Father the human life that the others of us have so signally failed to live'.¹⁴⁰ The atoning work of Calvary is also the decisive battle over evil. For recapitulation, confirmed by Aulén, overcomes both the punishment and the *power* of sin; 'when Christ overcomes the tyrants which hold mankind in bondage, His victory brings with it the Divine blessing, justification, grace, life; the note of triumph rings out'.¹⁴¹ Bearing the consequences of evil in His flesh, Christ manifests Satan's voracious hostility to creation, before destroying his power. The cross completes the victory begun in Christ's

¹³⁶ 1.30.13, 3.16.1.

¹³⁷ Wingren: *Incarnation*, p113.

¹³⁸ 5.23.2, p551.

¹³⁹ 3.18.6, p447, 3.18.5. Mark particularly presents Christ as suffering Messiah, ἀρχηγὸν καὶ τελειωτὴν of costly discipleship (Mark 8:31-38, 10:32-45).

¹⁴⁰ Gunton: *Atonement*, p125. In Christ 'humanity pure and undefiled is brought to the Father as a concentrated offering of worship and praise', p161.

¹⁴¹ Aulén: *Christus Victor*, p167. A 'note' rarely heard in what Aulén calls the 'Latin' doctrine of atonement.

incarnation and obedient life, as evil ultimately overreaches itself, losing 'the battle at the moment when it seems to be victorious'.¹⁴² Luther clearly follows the Irenaeian track, when he sees in Christ crucified the devil's own destruction; 'Christ sticks in his gills, and he must spue Him out again, as the whale the prophet Jonah, and even as he chews Him the devil chokes himself and is slain, and is taken captive by Christ'.¹⁴³

Christ's death is thus the triumph of protracted conflict, the fruition in season of His lifelong obedience.¹⁴⁴ In Cullmann's words, 'the High Priest must realize the τελείωσις through His whole life until the final sacrifice of His voluntary death'.¹⁴⁵ Yet notable commentators have failed to give the theme due prominence. Kelly for example falsely accords Irenaeus with the 'physical' theory of salvation, whereby human nature is sanctified by the very act of Christ becoming man.¹⁴⁶ Pannenberg makes similar assumptions, tracing back to Irenaeus the theory of deification through the act of incarnation.¹⁴⁷ The trend has been to overlook Irenaeus' presentation of Calvary as the crowning fulfilment of Christ's *recapitulative* ministry (as whenever the bishop stands accused of neglecting the horrors of sin for his cosmic project of maturation).¹⁴⁸ Yet Irenaeus is no moralistic rationalist, as Harnack would claim. Adam's calling is fulfilled only when Christ's all-embracing obedience *brings* Him to the tree, precisely because - as Brunner observes - Adam's sin is *the real sin of us all*, overcome in Christ's obedient recapitulation on behalf of all Adam's children.¹⁴⁹ And by defining Calvary as the crowning of Christ's lifelong obedience, Irenaeus also avoids an abstract transactional doctrine of atonement, which too readily divides Christ's life from His death.¹⁵⁰ For Christ is both willing sacrifice and obedient High Priest, such that 'his whole life is seen as an act of self-offering that culminates in the cross'.¹⁵¹ The conception of atonement does concentrate primarily upon victory over sin, death and Satan, as well as the renewal of humanity to life and immortality. But Irenaeus does also mention the propitiatory vicarious sacrifice for sin which, though less developed a theme, remains fundamental to the Adam-Christ motif.¹⁵² The bishop unmasks the insufficiencies of Weinandy's words, that 'Jesus' obedient death on the cross was an act of supreme love to the Father, thus making just reparation for our spiteful and rebellious affront to the all-loving God'.¹⁵³ There is here no explanation to *how* reparation is made. Indeed

¹⁴² Aulén, p71.

¹⁴³ M.Luther: *Luther's Works*, XX p334ff, ed. J.Pelikan & H.T.Lehmann, St Louis: Concordia, 1958.

¹⁴⁴ 3.16.7, [John 2:4, 7:30].

¹⁴⁵ Cullmann: *Christology*, p93.

¹⁴⁶ Kelly: *Doctrines*, p376.

¹⁴⁷ W.Pannenberg: *Jesus-God and Man*, trans L.Wilkins/D.Triebe, London: SCM, 1968, p39-40.

¹⁴⁸ For example Benoît: *Irénée*, p230.

¹⁴⁹ Brunner: *Mediator*, p258, 509-10. Contra Harnack: *Outlines*, who claims Irenaeus denies substitutionary sacrifice and sacrificial death (p143).

¹⁵⁰ Interestingly, Calvin also avoids the disconnection, 'from the time when He took on the form of a Servant, He began to pay the price of liberation in order to redeem us' (*Institutes*, 2.16.5, p507).

¹⁵¹ Farrow: *Ascension*, p34.

¹⁵² For example Irenaeus says the Lord 'propitiating indeed for us the Father against whom we had sinned', 5.17.1, p544. Also 4.33.12, *Demonstration* §34, 69. See A.Bandstra: 'Paul and an Ancient Interpreter: a Comparison of the Teaching of Redemption in Paul and Irenaeus', *CTJ*, vol 5, 1970, p43-63 [p58-60].

¹⁵³ Weinandy: *Likeness*, p83.

if Jesus fully conforms to our *sinful* flesh, as Weinandy assumes, He is no longer able to act as Last Adam *on our behalf*. Irenaean recapitulation however *requires* the last Adam to suffer the judgement of the first. Recapitulation requires atoning sacrifice.

Ἀνακεφαλαίωσις thus demands the journey from crib to cross, as Calvary reverses the tragedy of Eden; ‘the transgression which occurred through the tree was undone by the obedience of the tree...[when] the Son of Man, obeying God, was nailed to the tree’.¹⁵⁴ In fact supposing that Adam fell on the first day of his creation, Irenaeus discerns *temporal* parallels between the two men, since the last Adam secures redemption on the sixth day, the day of the fall; ‘the Lord ...recapitulating in Himself this day, underwent His sufferings upon the day preceding the Sabbath, that is, the sixth day of the creation, on which day man was created’.¹⁵⁵ For Christ must enter into the totality of sin and death in order to conquer from within, as we shall see. In Dahl’s words, ‘God in Christ has entered into the very center of their activity [sin, death, corruption] and released the whole totality of human nature from their grasp, as is shown forth in his resurrection’.¹⁵⁶ This broad Irenaean perspective defines the cross as the crowning work of atonement, even as ‘the Incarnation is the necessary presupposition of the Atonement, and the Atonement the completion of the Incarnation’.¹⁵⁷ The Son submits to both the Father’s judgement and humanity’s rejection, becoming in Mackenzie’s words ‘not merely the agent, but the form and substance of our redemption and atonement with God’.¹⁵⁸

Irenaeus’ continuous Christological trajectory from incarnation through earthly life, death, resurrection and exaltation answers *cur Deus homo* without the prevalent Anselmian tendency to divide incarnation and atonement, life and death. He does not depreciate the cross as intimated by some, neither does he spawn Harnack’s liberalism where redemption becomes the sole act of incarnation. He simply teaches Christ’s death as the triumphal atoning climax of protracted conflict. True to his concern for holding together what others would divide, Irenaeus’ doctrine of recapitulation succeeds in preserving Scripture’s continuous line from Christ’s incarnation to His exaltation, with no one truth claiming exclusive worth. The incarnation is pivotal to Calvary, whilst not denying that atonement was secured at the cross. Dunn agrees, with the words ‘within the New Testament there is no evidence of a concept of incarnation as itself the decisive act of salvation – flesh redeemed by being assumed. The moment of salvation remains decisively centred on the cross’.¹⁵⁹ And Aulén is right to observe the regular lack of this holistic soteriology in what he calls the Latin judicial doctrine of Atonement.¹⁶⁰ Whether it be the

¹⁵⁴ *Demonstration* §33, p62, 5.16.3, p544, 5.17.3-4.

¹⁵⁵ 5.23.2, p551.

¹⁵⁶ Dahl: *Resurrection*, p75. Or Cullmann, ‘He can conquer death only by actually dying, by betaking Himself to the sphere of death, the destroyer of life, to the sphere of “nothingness”, of abandonment by God’, *Immortality*, p27.

¹⁵⁷ Aulén: *Christus Victor*, p168.

¹⁵⁸ MacKenzie: *Irenaeus*, p200.

¹⁵⁹ J.Dunn: *The Christ and the Spirit, vol 1: Christology*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998, p46.

¹⁶⁰ Aulén: *Christus Victor*, p45.

Incarnation within the Catholic tradition or the Cross within Evangelicalism, indispensable moments in the work of salvation are too often extrapolated from one-another. We might say Irenaeus offers us a timely broader outlook, where the Christological work of atonement at the Cross is fundamentally a work of *at-one-ment*, a reconciliation, restoration and enriching of creation. It is no crude ‘intervention’ of God in human history on one occasion. Rather ‘the sacrifice of Christ is to this end: that God should, in him and through the Spirit, reorder to himself his alienated creation. That is the glory of Christ, both in the New Testament and in eternity’.¹⁶¹ It is the outworking of the eternal love of God seen in the Spirit-filled Man, whose obedient life to sacrificial death begins the rightful reordering of creation into Him who is the Head. The Word made flesh, secures the victory of God for the cosmos from *within* human life. Indeed it is precisely as *Christ crucified* that the Word reveals His all-encompassing glory,

Since He is the Word of God Almighty, who invisibly pervades the whole creation, and encompasses its length, breadth, height and depth – for by the Word of God everything is administered – so too was the Son of God crucified in these [fourfold dimensions], having been imprinted in the form of the cross in everything.¹⁶²

So in conclusion, Irenaeus’ doctrine of Incarnation preserves the unity of the one οἰκονομία θεοῦ, because the Son is the *eternal* Mediator of the Father. Here the bishop unmask the pitfalls of a contemporary Christology so often prevalent in inter-faith dialogue, whereby the Son is only *one* revelatory aeon among many in the pantheon. Moreover by denoting the Son as eternal Mediator, the bishop discloses the shortcomings of locating Christ’s mediation only in the Word *made flesh*, since this is to echo Gnostic assumptions that the Father is unknown before the coming of His incarnate Son. This of course does not deny that the Divine will is supremely manifest in the Λόγος ἑνωστικός. On the contrary the incarnation is God’s original plan, confirming the goodness of Adamic life. Irenaeus exhorts us to apprehend the virgin conception as more than ‘rescue mission’, as well as to relocate anthropology’s origins from ourselves to the Son. For He is the true Man, who conjoins His handiwork to re-enact the human story, maturing the Adamic copy into His own eternal Image. The Incarnation embodies in His Person the fellowship between Divine and human, as Christ’s obedient flesh perfected in the womb and indwelt by the Spirit, works salvation for us. In the virgin womb Creator becomes created, the generation of new life from old, a harmonious Christological union of flesh and Spirit that begins the recapitulation of created Adam and the reordering of creation into Him who is its Head. Incarnation anticipates the final promised fellowship between God and man. In this light, the recapitulative process is both an affirmation of this creation and the promise of its transformation. It is the perfect riposte to any Gnostic bent that craves the dismemberment of creation from redemption.

¹⁶¹ Gunton: ‘Christ the Sacrifice: Aspects of the Language and Imagery of the Bible’, ed L.Hurst/N.Wright: ‘*The Glory of Christ in the New Testament*’, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987, p238.

¹⁶² *Demonstration* §34, p62.

CHAPTER 4: 'THE EXALTATION OF FLESH'

Rising and Ascending in the Flesh

Then, at last, He came on to death itself, that He might be 'the first-born from the dead, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence,' the Prince of life, existing before all, and going before all. (2.22.4)

In the previous chapter we considered how the eternal Word assumes all that pertains to Adam as He comes to indwell the virgin's womb, beginning a new generation of life by the Spirit and initiating a renewal of the created order from within the old, pointing the way to creation's future. The true Man grows in favour with God and men, preserving and perfecting Adamic life, as He exemplifies wholehearted obedience to the Father. Yet His perfected flesh comes to suffer the curse of fallen Adam as He hangs upon the Tree; His pure life lies condemned.¹ The project at this point appears aborted, recapitulation has only repeated Eden's tragic outcome. Neither human existence nor creation's future is any clearer. The cosmos therefore *craves* the resurrection of the Man from heaven, whose conquest of death confirms His incarnation as the genesis of Adam's renewal. And in His resurrected body the last Adam proclaims the *exaltation* of flesh, the wondrous destiny of His fallen τύπος over all its enemies.

The Hope of Resurrection-Ascension

If the Irenaeian project is an intricate account of creation's hope, we find that hope come to pass - at least prototypically - in the Resurrection of the incarnate Word. The miracle is not without testimony, as evidenced in Irenaeus' impressive collection of Scripture's prophecies. Christ after all was raised on the third day κατὰ τὰς γραφάς (1Corinthians 15:4). But the bishop's theology extends beyond a collection of biblical texts anticipating resurrection. At the vision's heart is a deep-seated concern not to fracture creation from redemption. Resurrection thus becomes a lynchpin between first and new order, miraculously extending the truth that all created life is the perpetual gift of God, whether in creation or new creation, protology or eschatology. Irenaeus avoids extrapolating the miracle of Resurrection from that of *creatio continua*, ensuring that the eschatological transition is not unhinged from this first order. Resurrection becomes the *extension* of Divine mercy, not some fanciful *intervention* against a Newtonian 'natural' world. In the bishop's words, 'He who at the beginning created man, did

¹ Deuteronomy 21:22-3, Galatians 3:13, Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34.

promise him a second birth after his dissolution into earth'.² The challenge is evident, to a Church which regularly depicts the resurrection as an abstracted imposition upon a self-regulative order. Prolonged life has always proclaimed Divine grace,³ as does the bestowal of life from death. The Breath of life must infuse the dead bones of both first and second creation. Resurrection marks God's *continuing* covenant with His ever-dependent creation, His enduring grace to confer and sustain life even beyond the grave, His 'Yes' to the cosmic project.

It is this understanding of resurrection, as the *extension* of Divine grace upon which creation depends, which ultimately delineates the covenant with Abraham, the promise of enduring Divine-human fellowship beyond the grave. It is the hope of Exodus 3 to which Jesus refers the unbelieving Sadducees, when the Lord reveals to Moses His Name as God of the *living* patriarchs. Christ fellowships with the fathers upon their death, in paradisaal communion pre-incarnation. The patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob died in faith, yet live to God, 'for if He be not the God of the dead, but of the living, yet was called the God of the fathers who were sleeping, they do indubitably live to God, and have not passed out of existence, since they are children of the resurrection'.⁴

Death cannot shatter covenant fellowship between the Lord and His people. To think otherwise is to know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God (Matthew 22:29). Schep therefore maintains that 'there is sufficient ground in the Old Testament literature to claim that the resurrection belief is of Israelite origin, finding its deepest roots in God's revelation to his people'.⁵ The Exodus promise stretches beyond a national covenant, since in Baillie's words,

If God had been merely the nation's God, then the immortality of the nation would be all we could properly hope for. But if God is the God of individuals, if individuals can enter into fellowship with Him, if individuals are precious in His sight, then our hope in God necessarily becomes a hope for the individual.⁶

The promise is anticipated in Enoch and Elijah, who prefigure not a Gnostic-like denial of the body at death, but the *bodily* deliverance of the righteous, 'Enoch, when he pleased God, was translated in the same body in which he did please Him, thus pointing out by anticipation the translation of the just'. Elijah too was caught up, 'exhibiting in prophecy the assumption of those who are spiritual...that nothing stood in the way of their body being translated and caught up'.⁷ Of course the bodily assumption of these two saints need not compromise Christ's ministry as ἀρχηγός of salvation. Their translation to heaven does not disclose the new creation; resurrection-transformation awaits Christ's *own* perfecting of Adamic life, by way of His

² 5.15.1, p542.

³ 5.5.1, reiterated for example in 2 Kings 20:1-11, Psalm 90:10, Isaiah 40:6-8, Matthew 6:27, Acts 17:28.

⁴ 4.5.2, p467, Exodus 3:6, Matthew 22:30-33.

⁵ Schep: *Resurrection*, p62. Though such a view remains hotly contested, see C.F.Evans: *Resurrection and the New Testament*, London: SCM, 1970, p11.

⁶ Baillie: *Life Everlasting*, p137.

⁷ Both quotations in 5.5.1, p531.

journey from incarnation to ascension. Yet Enoch and Elijah do announce Divine delight in corporeal existence, thus anticipating the future resurrection, on the Day the Lord remembers 'His own dead ones who slept in the dust', coming down 'to raise them up, that He might save them'.⁸ Numerous Scriptures preach this hope, promising the Lord will not only deliver נִפְּץ from Sheol, but that death can hold no tyranny for those knowing Divine fellowship.⁹

For the Old Testament, then, the assurance of future life does not lie in the idea that some part of the individual survives death, but in the firm hope that God will raise from death those in covenant relationship with Him.¹⁰

This is the hope of Old Testament saints, the *everlasting* covenant promising fellowship beyond the grave (Genesis 17:7). It explains why Israel must despise Death's rule, as Wolff makes plain.¹¹ The same promise calls Abraham to follow 'the Word of God, walking as a pilgrim with the Word, that He might [afterwards] have his abode with the Word'.¹² As father of the faith, 'he believed in things future, as if they were already accomplished, because of the promise of God; and in like manner do we also, because of the promise of God, behold through faith that inheritance [laid up for us] in the [future] kingdom'.¹³

These Scriptural hopes of redemption from death and unbroken fellowship with God, the promised renewal of Israel after the judgement of exile, converge and crystallise in the resurrection of the *Christ*, following His exile from the Father. For both His death *and* resurrection are κατὰ τὰς γραφὰς, including the promise of life on the 'third day', attested on various occasions.¹⁴ The Psalmic pattern of suffering and grief before lasting joy anticipates the death and resurrection of Him who forms the heart of Scripture.¹⁵ Irenaeus, along with many Church fathers, certainly propounds a scrupulously Christocentric hermeneutic. One such example is Justin, who sees in the salvation of Noah's family an anticipation of Christ's resurrection through the judgement of death,

Righteous Noah, along with the other mortals at the deluge...being eight in number, were a symbol of the eighth day, wherein Christ appeared when He rose from the dead...For Christ, being the first-born of every creature, became again the chief of another race regenerated by Himself through water, and faith and wood, containing the mystery of the cross; even as Noah was saved by wood when he rode over the waters.¹⁶

⁸ 4.33.12, p510, 3.20.4, 4.22.1, *Demonstration* §67, Isaiah 26:19.

⁹ Genesis 5:24, 1 Samuel 2:8, 2 Kings 2:11, 13:21, Job 19:25-27, Psalms 16:9-11, 22:29, 30:3, 49:14-15, 71:20, 73:23-27, 86:13, Proverbs 10:25, 14:32, 15:24, Isaiah 25:7-8, 26:19-21, Ezekiel 37:1-14, Daniel 12:13, Jonah 2:1-10.

¹⁰ K.Brower & M.Elliott: *The Reader Must Understand. Eschatology in Bible and Theology*, Leicester: Apollos, 1997, p211.

¹¹ Wolff: *Anthropology*, p100-6 [Leviticus 11:32-35, Numbers 19:11-13, Deuteronomy 26:14].

¹² 4.5.3, p467. See chapter 2 footnote 246.

¹³ 4.21.1, p492. Irenaeus may have in mind Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16, 17-19, 26, 35-39. Calvin too sees the patriarchs willingly suffer trials, in expectation of final resurrection (*Institutes*: 2.10.3, 2.10.7-14, 3.25.4).

¹⁴ One might suggest Genesis 1:11-13, 22:5, Exodus 19:5-6, Leviticus 7:17-18, 23:10-15 (first-fruits after the Sabbath), 2 Kings 20:5, Hosea 6:1-2, Jonah 1:17.

¹⁵ The suffering/exaltation theme dominates many psalms (Psalms 2, 22, 24, 42-3, 69, 110, 118), as indeed elsewhere (Isaiah 52:13-53:12).

¹⁶ Justin Martyr: *Trypho*, §138, p268.

Christ the promise of truth springs from the earth in virgin conception, the ‘tabernacle’ of David whose resurrection fulfils the dynastic promise (Acts 13:34-7).¹⁷ It is He who establishes an eternal rule, the conquest of death itself.¹⁸ The oft-quoted Psalm 110:1 describes His return to heaven accompanied by rapturous praise, as David ‘knowing by the Spirit the dispensation of the advent of this Person...confessed Him as Lord, sitting on the right hand of the Most High Father’.¹⁹ The hope of resurrection-ascension takes root in One whose willing abasement and subsequent exaltation declare Him Lord of all.²⁰ Appointed as cosmic Judge, the Christ ‘awaits the time determined by the Father for the judgment, when all enemies will be subjected to Him’.²¹ Irenaeus, having apprehended the testimony of *all* Scripture, challenges the prevalent hermeneutical assumptions of a Church often silent upon the breadth of Scripture’s witness.

Vindication of the Divine Son

Having begun to see how Irenaeus interprets *Christologically* Scripture’s prophetic movement from sorrow to joy, suffering to glory, self-abasement to exaltation, we more readily appreciate the magnitude of Christ’s resurrection. For the Son’s bodily resurrection from death marks His vindication. But this is no monist splendour, no self-oriented broadcast. Rather, Christ’s resurrection is the pronouncement of Another, who declares again to the world ‘Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα’. *The Father’s* delight in His Son, twice ‘disclosed at Christ’s baptism and transfiguration, finds its fullness in the resurrection. For resurrection is the Father’s verdict upon His beloved Son, that He is truly ‘righteous’. The horror of the Cross leaves us understanding resurrection as the redemption of Christ, His deliverance from the power and curse of death. So Richard Gaffin maintains, ‘the resurrection is the salvation of Jesus as the last Adam; it and no other event in his experience is the point of *his* transition from wrath to grace’.²² Ferguson too comprehends Christ’s resurrection as His sanctification by the Spirit (His radical deliverance from sin), as well as His glorification (the transformation of His body).²³ The Son of David’s flesh is proclaimed ‘Son-of-God-in-power’, as the Spirit accomplishes the Father’s will by raising Him from death (Romans 1:2-5),²⁴ leaving Harris right to say, ‘it was not the Sonship of Christ but His Sonship “with power” that was inaugurated by

¹⁷ 3.5.1 (Psalm 85:11), *Demonstration* §62 (Amos 9:11). The body is called a ‘tabernacle’ in (2 Corinthians 5:1).

¹⁸ Genesis 49:8-12, Numbers 24:14-19, Isaiah 2:2-4, Micah 4:2-4, Daniel 2:28-45, 1 Corinthians 15:54-7, *Demonstration* §49 [Isaiah 45:1, Psalm 2:7-8], §64 [Psalm 132:10-12].

¹⁹ David also calls Him ‘eternal Priest of God’ (Psalm 110:4), declaring Him immortal (*Demonstration* §48). Also §83 [Psalm 68:17-18], §84 [Psalm 24:7-9].

²⁰ Matthew 5:17, 22:29, Luke 16:31, 24:25-27, 44-47, John 5:39-40, 16:8-9, Romans 10:4, 8-9, 2 Corinthians 1:19-20, Galatians 3:24.

²¹ *Demonstration* §85, p92. Psalm 19:6 anticipates this judgment (§88: Isaiah 50:8-9).

²² Richard B. Gaffin Jr: *The Centrality of the Resurrection*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978, p116.

²³ Ferguson: *Holy Spirit*, p105-6 [Romans 6:9-10, 1 Corinthians 15:42-4, Philippians 3:21].

²⁴ 3.16.3. Ορισθέντος (Romans 1:4) retains notions of ‘appointment’ (Acts 2:23, 10:42, 17:31, Hebrews 4:7).

the Resurrection'.²⁵ He who endured such opposition from humanity enters the glory that crowns His willing subjection to Calvary's shame (Hebrews 12:2-3). The Father vindicates Jesus as Messiah, overturning the original condemnation, since a reversed verdict means 'the initiative must come from the One who pronounced the curse'.²⁶ This is not to advocate Adoptionism, where Christ *becomes* the Divine Son at resurrection. It is simply to acknowledge the Father's public proclamation of His Son's righteous life, 'it is the resurrection of Christ which is the declaration... vindication and...seal of this righteousness which is His and by which He will judge and restore all things'.²⁷

Moreover the resurrection pronounces Christ's rule over the final enemy. The empty tomb climaxes Christ's victory, where Satan's most violent attack at Calvary secures his most crushing defeat.²⁸ The eternally Begotten of the Father through whom all was made passes through death to become the first-born from the dead, 'that in all things He might have the pre-eminence'.²⁹ As the Son's incarnation brings Him sovereignty on earth, so His resurrection brings dominion over the realm of Death,

That even as the Word of God had the sovereignty in the heavens, so also might He have the sovereignty in earth, inasmuch as [He was] a righteous man...and that He might have the pre-eminence over those things which are under the earth, He Himself being made 'the first-begotten of the dead'.³⁰

It is this appreciation of Christ's ministry as a completed journey from incarnation to resurrection-ascension, that brings acknowledgement of Christ's authority over all,

That He might demonstrate the resurrection of the flesh and be pre-eminent...in all things: in heaven, for [He is] the firstborn of the Father's counsel, the perfect Word, guiding and governing all things; while on earth, as He was the firstborn of the Virgin, a [man] righteous, holy, pious...good, pleasing to God, perfect in all things...for He [is] the firstborn from the dead and the Author of the life of God.³¹

It is in this sense the Son of God becomes Son-of-God-in-power, 'filling out' His eternal authority into all aspects of the cosmos, as He journeys from heaven to earth to under the earth, before returning as last Adam to heaven. Reflecting upon the use of ὑπερυψώω in Philippians 2:9, Cullmann develops the theme,

If Jesus was already the image of God in his pre-existence and now God has done more than exalt him, this can only mean that after his death Jesus did not simply return to the form of existence he already had as the Heavenly Man in his pre-existence with God before his incarnation. He has now entered a still closer relationship with God; God now

²⁵ Harris: *Raised Immortal*, p74.

²⁶ Harris, p72.

²⁷ MacKenzie: *Irenaeus*, p193 (Acts 17:31, Romans 2:16).

²⁸ Wingren: *Incarnation*, p121.

²⁹ 2.22.4, p391, 3.16.3 (Colossians 1:15-18).

³⁰ 4.20.2, p488.

³¹ *Demonstration* §39, p65.

confers upon him the title *Kyrios* with full lordship over all...In other words, God confers his own name with his whole lordship upon Jesus because of Jesus' proven obedience as the Son of Man. Christ thus receives the equality with God which in the obedience of the Heavenly Man he did not usurp as a 'thing to be grasped'. God has now given him the equality.³²

Dunn strikes a similar note, when asserting that Jesus' resurrection introduces Him 'into a relationship with God decisively new, eschatologically distinct, perhaps we should even say qualitatively different from what he had enjoyed before'.³³ Yet we must reject Dunn's subsequent assumption, where Christ's role as second Adam is defined not by His pre-existence, nor even incarnation, but by the resurrection.³⁴ On the contrary, we must maintain that resurrection does not initiate but actually *accomplishes* the recapitulative reversal of Adam's story, 'universalising' the rule of Him who conquers the adversary of all in Adam (1Corinthians 15:12-22). For His conquest of death declares Him 'Lord' and 'Christ' (Acts 2:36), Head of the Church (Colossians 1:18), eternal High Priest (Hebrews 7:15-16), with authority over the living and the dead (Romans 14:9). As the Father releases His Son from the prison-cords of death, not even Hades can prevail against the Church (Acts 2:24, 3:15, 4:10, Matthew 16:18). Freed from death's curse, Christ the Living One now holds Death's keys (Revelation 1:18). Through resurrection He receives all authority to renew the cosmos, even as He Himself has been renewed. As Moltmann affirms, 'the Creator has given Him the Lordship over His world. That is why He fills heaven and earth with the glory of His resurrection life and will renew the universe'.³⁵ Death is recapitulated in reverse. Human life has been brought into a new creation, through the resurrection of the last Adam.

Irenaeus therefore understands Christ's resurrection not as an (albeit welcome) intrusion upon the 'natural' order, but as the prototypical τέλος of the original creation project. Christ comes not only to save those in Adam, but also to fulfil Adam's commission, the exercise of true dominion upon the earth. For Christ is the Image of God, the Father's chosen Priest-King, renewing creation from within, fulfilling through His resurrection the Adamic commission, as was always intended. Now justified in the Spirit, He extends His dominion with His command to the Church, accomplishing man's destiny.³⁶ O'Donovan develops the point,

In his conquest over death and in his glorification at the Father's right hand we see man as he was made to be, not subject to the angelic forces of sin and mortality which presently oppress him, but able for the first time to take his place in the cosmos as its lord.³⁷

³² Cullmann: *Christology*, p180.

³³ Dunn: *Christology*, p35.

³⁴ Dunn: 'as the first Adam came into existence...at creation, the beginning of the old age, so the last Adam...came into existence at resurrection, the beginning of the age to come', p108.

³⁵ Moltmann: *God in Creation*, p172.

³⁶ 1 Timothy 3:16, Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8.

³⁷ O'Donovan: *Resurrection*, p54.

The triumph of resurrection brings pure humanity to light, as the Son is declared the true Image of God, His transformation to σῶμα πνευματικόν now complete, that He might embody the promised new creation.

Irenaeus thus presents Christ's resurrection as His vindication, when the Father declares His Son 'righteous', pronouncing Him Son-of-God-in-power by the Spirit. Put simply, 'the resurrection was and remains, first of all, what God has done for *Jesus*'.³⁸ In this light, resurrection speaks as much about the Father as the Son, challenging the Church to comprehend and communicate the event *Trinitarianly*. Christ's resurrection annunciates His supremacy over the last enemy, His vanquishing of Satan, His pre-eminence in all corners of the cosmos, His fulfilment of the Adamic commission. Perhaps most relevant to our question, the resurrection is Christ's own transformation from σῶμα ψυχικόν to σῶμα πνευματικόν, securing the transition from old to new creation. The future belongs to Christ. And He invites all Adam's children to partake it with Him.

Righteousness and the Triumph of the Body

We have seen how in the Spirit's power the Father declares His Son 'righteous' by His resurrection from the dead. The resurrection therefore vindicates *all* that belongs to Adam's life - body, soul and spirit. Indeed it *must* do so, to secure a victorious and complete recapitulation. Resurrection must include the triumph of the body. In this sense 'resurrection' far exceeds simply the hope of 'immortality', as Cullmann has faithfully made clear,

Immortality, in fact, is only a *negative* assertion: the soul does *not* die, but simply lives on. Resurrection is a *positive* assertion: the whole man, who has really died, is recalled to life by a new act of creation by God.³⁹

Ἀνακεφαλαίωσις thus *requires* bodily resurrection, over against obdurate Gnostic theories that debar all transformation of substance, conveniently distorting the Pauline assertion that 'flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom' (1Corinthians 15:50). Transformation for the Gnostic is inconceivable, there is simply the re-segregation of substances temporarily and unfortunately conjoined. The aeon 'Christ' brings back 'Jesus', but not in a material body, sending 'the mundane parts back again into the world'.⁴⁰ The disciples are beguiled into thinking the Saviour rose in a fleshly body. There is no corporeal resurrection, 'the Lord Himself...did not rise again upon the third day; but immediately upon His expiring on the cross, undoubtedly

³⁸ R.E.Brown: *The Virginial Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus*, London: Chapman, 1973, p128.

³⁹ Cullmann: *Immortality*, p27.

⁴⁰ 1.30.13, p357.

departed on high, leaving his body to the earth'.⁴¹ The heavenly Saviour, no longer ruling his creation, is subject to unbridgeable cosmic laws.

It falls to Irenaeus to expose this protracted Gnostic division between somatic and pneumatic, which simply forgets that flesh and blood *already* participate in Divine life. There is ongoing relationship between σῶμα, σὰρξ and πνεῦμα even within this *present* order; 'the flesh...is not destitute [of participation] in the constructive wisdom and power of God'.⁴² And if mortal members are quickened by the mercies of God even in temporal life, how much more can flesh be vivified to *never-ending* life! The bishop thus unmasks the inherent faith-lessness of the all-too-contemporary Gnostic assumption that underplays the miracle of creation sustained. God after all grants life to birds of the air and lilies of the field, according them a glory surpassing that of Solomon (Matthew 6:25-30). Flesh is only ever sustained by His loving purpose. Its eternal salvation, we might say, simply 'extends' this unfolding grace,

Since the Lord has power to infuse life into what He has fashioned, and since the flesh is capable of being quickened, what remains to prevent its participating in incorruption, which is a blissful and never-ending life granted by God?⁴³

The prolonged life of our ante-diluvium predecessors bears witness to this mercy, since 'neither the nature of any created thing...nor the weakness of the flesh, can prevail against the will of God. For God is not subject to created things, but created things to God; and all things yield obedience to His will'.⁴⁴ The great fish obeys his Creator by swallowing Jonah and spewing him out, whilst fire spares the flesh of Ananias, Azarias and Mishael, as they fellowship with the Son in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, 'from the whale's belly and from the fiery furnace men issued forth unhurt...led forth as it were by the hand of God, for the purpose of declaring His power'.⁴⁵ Flesh *already* depends upon Divine life. Nothing prevents its future transformation.

Irenaeus therefore knows no redemption that does not include bodily resurrection. For death is no Darwinian 'natural' process, but is the great Intruder upon God's good creation, tearing body, soul and spirit asunder. The bishop challenges our own age to acknowledge any redemption denying the Son's *bodily* resurrection as an illusion. Popular teaching is deeply Gnostic in this regard, as vastly diverse 'redemptions' skirt around the troublesome dissolution of the body; an uncanny echo of Brunner's prophetic words, 'it is a remarkable fact that modern religion – whether it be coloured with moralistic, speculative, or mystical ideas – ignores the problem of death'.⁴⁶ Reconciliation however must mean *holistic* redemption from death,

⁴¹ 5.31.1, p560.

⁴² 5.3.3, p529.

⁴³ 5.3.3, p530.

⁴⁴ 5.5.2, p531.

⁴⁵ 5.5.2, p531; Jonah 1:17 uses נָמַן (LXX: προστάσσω) 'to command/order/appoint', whilst 2:10 says the Lord 'spoke' to the fish.

⁴⁶ Brunner: *Mediator*, p566.

freedom from death's curse for the *body* as for the soul. This is the redemption secured in Christ's resurrection, following atonement, 'the God of all would offer eternal life *by means of the resurrection from the dead*, through Him who died and rose, Jesus Christ'.⁴⁷ And in this resurrection 'spiritual' and 'material' are not at variance. In Ramsey's words, 'the message of the New Testament is pervaded through and through by the belief that the spiritual and material are interwoven in the purpose of the Word-made-flesh'.⁴⁸ In Irenaeus terms, redemption must include bodily resurrection.

We can therefore call Christ's resurrection the declaration of man's righteousness, the vindication of the Divine will for Adam's offspring. The verdict 'eternally righteous' follows the acquittal of sin, as the empty tomb follows Calvary (Romans 4:25).⁴⁹ The old creation dies with the Man on the cross, the new creation begins with His resurrection from death. For *He* is the true Temple, the dwelling of God destroyed and rebuilt in three days, the Pattern for the cosmos.⁵⁰ He brings the tearing of the temple veil, even as the promised Day of the Lord prophesies the rending of the heavens.⁵¹ The temple is destroyed at Calvary, but the taunting crowd fail to see the accomplished prophecy (Matthew 27:39-40, Mark 15:29-30). The Temple is then raised on the third day as firstfruits of a new creation.⁵² The resurrection thus confirms Christ as ἀρχή of the new order, securing for Adam's children a passage through death into the Presence of the Father, by 'raising in Himself fallen man...above to the highest heaven, to the right hand of the glory of the Father, as God had promised by the prophets saying "I will raise up the fallen tabernacle of David"'.⁵³

As the Father's light rests upon the flesh of His resurrected Son, so we bathe in the light of His splendour.⁵⁴ The final resurrection - prefigured on the third day - marks a new cosmic order, a glorified deathless Spirit-filled bodily existence far surpassing earlier raisings (Luke 7:11-17, 8:40-2, 49-56, John 11:1-44). Lazarus for one is merely restored to the same fleshly body, only to die again. His and indeed our permanent resurrection can only *follow* the resurrection of Christ, the Firstborn from the dead. Eternally righteous to God, the Son is raised to a new order of bodily life. So too His people will be declared righteous through bodily resurrection and the permanent Spirit-empowered transformation of their flesh into all-surpassing glory.

⁴⁷ Italics mine, *Demonstration* §41, p67.

⁴⁸ M.Ramsey: *The Resurrection of Christ*, London: Bles, 1956, p57.

⁴⁹ Calvin for one tends to conflate the distinction between sin atoned for (cross) and righteousness declared (resurrection), saying 'we have in His death *the complete fulfilment* of salvation' (*Institutes* 2.16.13, p521).

⁵⁰ The earthly tabernacle models heavenly truths [Ex 25:9,40], with the heavens represented as a curtain/tent [Psalm 104:2, Isa 40:22].

⁵¹ Psalm 102:25-6, Isaiah 34:4, Amos 5:18-20. The Day of the Lord *is* a day of darkness not light (Matthew 27:45-6, Luke 23:44-5).

⁵² Brower/Elliott: *The Reader*, p31-3 [Ezekiel chapter 40-8].

⁵³ *Demonstration* §38, p64.

⁵⁴ 3.20.2, 4.20.2.

The Proleptic Event of Creation

We have seen how Irenaeus acknowledges the abiding mercy of God to sustain the flesh of this temporal order. God does not withdraw His Breath from creation. Without it flesh would be as withering grass and flowers of the field, as Scripture's testimony makes abundantly clear.⁵⁵ Creation cannot simply be reduced to materialist 'natural' laws, but is instead an *ongoing* work, the interplay between lifeless matter and Divine Breath, flesh and Spirit. Such insight is central to the resurrection. For Christ's resurrection is no Divine 'intervention' overriding a clockwork cosmic process, but is instead the *renewal* of flesh, its *transformation* to an eternal order. Resurrection belongs to the fabric of creation's hope. It is the redemption of creation, the τέλος of a world ever dependent on Divine Breath for ongoing life.

In fact, if the Spirit as perfecting Cause brings creation to maturity, He does so proleptically by raising the Word made flesh from the dead. For Christ's resurrection preaches more than His Sonship and the vindication of the body. His resurrection *is* creation's future. The true Man raised on the third day *constitutes* the new creation, as the cosmic future breaks into the temporal present in His own resurrection life. On the third day the Word made flesh exemplifies the transformation, declaring Himself Alpha and Omega of the entire cosmos. Irenaeus invites us to view the resurrection as the redemption of temporal creation. Christ raised from death is the supreme expression of God's continuing power over the created order. His resurrection brings 'transformation within continuity',⁵⁶ extending Divine action in creation by anticipating the project's completion,

The resurrection of Jesus represents the consistency of the divine action...consistency with the outcome of Jesus' obedience, as its affirmation and completion; and with the divine purposes for the creation, whose recapitulation and perfection are inaugurated in the ministry of Jesus.⁵⁷

The resurrection reminds us there can be no doctrine of creation without the Father's hands. Gunton is right to argue, 'there is little doubt that a major impulse for the development of a christological and pneumatological treatment of creation came from the resurrection of Jesus from the dead'.⁵⁸ For the resurrection, proclaiming God's power in creation and redemption, unravels an essentially dynamic conception of Providence distinguished from the monist course of Stoicism and Hellenism; 'resurrection and creation belong essentially together in the actualisation of God's fundamental purpose'.⁵⁹ The perspective is not uniquely Irenaean; Athenagoras and Tertullian see a similar correlation. As for the former,

⁵⁵ Job 32:8, 33:4, 34:14-15, Psalm 104:29-30, 139:7, 146:3-4, Ecclesiastes 3:19-20, 12:7, Isaiah 32:14-15, 44:3-4, 57:16, Zechariah 12:1.

⁵⁶ Gunton: *Christ and Creation*, p31.

⁵⁷ Gunton: *Doctrine of Creation*, p80.

⁵⁸ Gunton: *Triune Creator*, p23.

⁵⁹ Torrance: *Divine Meaning*, p52.

Nor can any one say that it is a work unworthy of God to raise up and bring together again a body which has been dissolved: for if the worse was not unworthy of Him, namely, to make the body which is subject to corruption and suffering, much more is the better not unworthy, to make one not liable to corruption or suffering.⁶⁰

Whilst Tertullian, with customary rhetoric, preaches yet more forcefully the dignity of resurrection,

God forbid, that He should abandon to everlasting destruction the labour of His own hands, the care of His own thoughts, the receptacle of His own Spirit, the queen of His creation, the inheritor of His own liberality, the priestess of His religion, the champion of His testimony, the sister of His Christ!⁶¹

Christ's resurrection thereby restores intelligibility to this world, validating the present order whilst anticipating its fulfilment. It means O'Donovan can argue convincingly that 'the resurrection of Christ, upon which Christian ethics is founded, vindicates the created order in this double sense: it redeems it and it transforms it'.⁶² Here in history stands the future of the cosmos, the résumé of Paul's gospel, Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἡ ἀνάστασις.⁶³ In Hardman's words,

The resurrection of our Lord marks His transition from a state of voluntary humiliation, enterprised on man's behalf, to a state of exaltation which contains within itself a pledge of the accomplishment of a like achievement in ourselves.⁶⁴

By seeing Christ's resurrection as expression of the *continuing* power of God over the created order, Irenaeus holds together a creation and redemption that Gnosticism delights to divide. Jesus' own ministry of raising the dead exhibits the continuity, as Jairus' daughter, the widow's son and Lazarus are raised in the same bodies in which they died, 'those who were healed were made whole in those members which had in times past been afflicted, and the dead rose in the identical bodies'.⁶⁵ By this deed the Lord prefigures the eternal resurrection by means of its *temporal* counterpart, showing 'it is He who is Himself able to extend both healing and life to His handiwork'.⁶⁶ Temporal resurrection restores the perishable body, whilst anticipating the need for the σῶμα πνευματικόν. This is not to deny that creation has been disrupted. On the contrary, resurrection to life is precisely the *overcoming* of a disruption engendered by sin, explaining why the life of resurrection flourishes in the new community of Christ's people. So in a remarkable testimony, (bodily) restoration from death stretches beyond the incarnate ministry of Christ and His apostles to the life of the Church, in starkest contrast to vacuous Gnostic boastings,

⁶⁰ Athenagoras: *On Resurrection*, chap 10 p154, in *ANF*, vol II, ed Roberts/Donaldson, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967, (10.6, 3.1, 8.4).

⁶¹ Tertullian: *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* p552, in *ANF*, vol III, ed Roberts/Donaldson, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973.

⁶² O'Donovan: *Resurrection*, p56, 13, 83.

⁶³ Acts 17:18, 24:14-15, Romans 10:9.

⁶⁴ O.Hardman: *The Resurrection of the Body*, London: SPCK, 1934, p49.

⁶⁵ 5.13.1, p539 (Mark 5:22, Luke 7:12, John 11:43).

⁶⁶ 5.13.1, p539, 4.5.2 (John 5:28-9).

So far are they from being able to raise the dead, as the Lord raised them, and the apostles did by means of prayer, *and as has been frequently done in the brotherhood on account of some necessity* – the entire Church in that particular locality entreating [the boon] with much fasting and prayer, the spirit of the dead man has returned, and he has been bestowed in answer to the prayers of the saints.⁶⁷

Such miracles, though not equivalent to final transformation, announce resurrection as Christ's continuous work upon His creation, the infusing of new life to the present order, whetting the cosmos' appetite for the bodily resurrection of Adam's children and the renewal of all things.

Through this lens Christ's resurrection becomes the supreme sign of the Eschaton, since in Manson's words 'the foundation-stone of the New Creation has come into position'.⁶⁸ It is because the historical particularity of the Word made flesh is *universal* in His ministry as last Adam, that the old cosmic order is crucified in His cross and the new order begins at His resurrection. Christ's flesh is transformed into the life of the coming age, that He might exemplify the *re-direction* of creation, promised in the power of the Spirit. All united to Him becomes *καὶνὴ κτίσις*, for He is the Firstborn from the dead, the Ruler and Beginning of the creation of God.⁶⁹ Thus Ferguson can say of Christ, 'He is the first man to enter into the intended eschatological destiny of the protological world, the first to be glorified in our humanity by its resurrection and transformation'.⁷⁰ Whilst Cullmann wisely affirms that 'dying is no longer an expression of the absolute lordship of Death, but only one of Death's last contentions for lordship. Death cannot put an end to the great fact that there is *one* risen Body'.⁷¹ The empty tomb is the first concrete sign that the new creation has begun. His bodily resurrection brings the dawn of a new world,

On the third day the friends of Christ coming at day-break to the place found the grave empty and the stone rolled away. In varying ways they realised the new wonder; but even they hardly realised that the world had died in the night. What they were looking at was the first day of a new creation, with a new heaven and a new earth; and in the semblance of the Gardener God walked again in the garden, in the cool not of the evening, but the dawn.⁷²

The incarnate Son, transformed from *σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως* to *σῶμα τῆς δόξης* (Philippians 3:21), makes known the future of creation, leaving Moltmann to describe Christ's resurrection as 'the beginning of the transfiguration of the body and of the earth'.⁷³ The resurrection is the supreme eschatological act.

⁶⁷ *Italics mine*, 2.31.2, p407. Here the spirit returns to reanimate a *perishable* body.

⁶⁸ Manson: 'Eschatology in the NT', in *Eschatology*, SJT Occasional Papers no.2, Edinburgh: Oliver&Boyd, 1953, p6.

⁶⁹ 2Corinthians 5:15-17, Galatians 6:14-15, Colossians 1:15-18, Revelation 1:5, 3:14.

⁷⁰ Ferguson: *Holy Spirit*, p250.

⁷¹ Cullmann: *Immortality*, p41.

⁷² G.K.Chesterton: *The Everlasting Man*, in *Collected Works of G.K.Chesterton*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986, p247.

⁷³ Moltmann: *The Coming of God*, London: SCM Press, 1996, p93.

New because it is the creation of the form of being which belongs to the end time. Again, it is a triune act: the Father raising the Son through the mediating action of the Spirit, and transforming His body to the life of the age to come. The resurrection is thus the anticipatory realisation of the eschatological destiny of the whole creation.⁷⁴

The new life, inaugurated by Christ's conception as the Spirit overshadows the virgin's womb, finds its glorious anticipatory end in Christ's resurrection from the dead. On this day the new Age dawned, as the hope anticipated by Israel,⁷⁵ breaks proleptically into creation in the one Man Jesus Christ. Here is the time of Divine favour, when the Lord appears at the fullness of the age, securing as *πρῶτος ἐξ ἀναστάσεως* the general resurrection of the dead.⁷⁶ The transformed world is already present in Him who discloses human destiny as one of victorious dominion, since 'to be human is...to share with Jesus a way which has its final goal in the overcoming of death'.⁷⁷

To apprehend Christ's resurrection as the proleptic announcement of new creation need not mean advancing a Pannenberg-like eschatology. For Pannenberg's insistence upon the *ontological* priority of the future risks leaving the present only *partially* real, veering existent creation towards Gnostic-like illusion, as 'the future lets go of itself to bring into being our present'.⁷⁸ To say that 'all Christian doctrine depends on the future of God's own coming to consummate His rule over His creation',⁷⁹ risks disengaging the passage of time from the history of Christ's *first* coming. The resurrection, far from securing the first-fruits of new creation, would simply reveal what must *still* be wrought. Neither, along with Reumann, should we parallel Christ's resurrection with a *creatio ex nihilo* reading of Romans 4:17.⁸⁰ This simply severs creation from redemption altogether, winning universal Gnostic approval, as the redeeming act is abstracted from the matrix of the first order, denying Christ's resurrection as the lynchpin of a redeemed project. Irenaeus by contrast connects Christ's third day experience to the resurrection future of believers *within a redeemed creation*, turning to Scripture's metaphor of Head and body,

As the Head rose from the dead, so also the remaining part of the body – [namely, the body] of every man who is found in life...may arise, blended together and strengthened through means of joints and bands by the increase of God, each of the members having its own proper and fit position in the body.⁸¹

⁷⁴ Gunton: *Triune Creator*, p224.

⁷⁵ John 11:24, Mark 12:23, Luke 14:14-15, 20:34-35, Acts 24:14-15.

⁷⁶ Isaiah 61:2, Hebrews 9:26, 1 Corinthians 10:11, 1 Peter 1:20, Galatians 4:4, Luke 10:23-24 [Acts 4:2, 17:18, 26:23], 'God has willed that the restored creation should take form in, and in relation, to one man', O'Donovan: *Resurrection*, p150.

⁷⁷ Watson: *Text*, p298.

⁷⁸ W.Pannenberg: *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, ed. R.Neuhaus, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969, p59.

⁷⁹ W.Pannenberg: *Systematic Theology*, vol 3, p531.

⁸⁰ J.Reumann: *Creation and New Creation*, Minneapolis: Augsburg 1973, p93.

⁸¹ 3.19.3, p449.

Christ's resurrection secures the resurrection of all found in Him. In terms of Romans 1:3-4, it marks the watershed between two ages, whereby in Gaffin's words, Christ's 'personal, incarnate mode of existence is now conformed to the pneumatic world-order entered at the resurrection'.⁸² Yet problems pervade this description of resurrection as the transition from σάρξ to πνεῦμα. For σάρξ is viewed solely negatively, as 'the inertia and weakness of the old aeon in antithesis to the Spirit as the power of the age-to-come'.⁸³ The view however loses sight of the *Spirit-filled* Son, who throughout His incarnate life as last Adam assumed a σάρξ wonderfully indwelt by πνεῦμα. The truth then is more nuanced, as σάρξ and πνεῦμα intimately relate throughout the life of the obedient Son. Furthermore Gaffin installs a potentially Gnostic interpretative grid, where σάρξ is 'shod' in its translation to πνεῦμα. Instead, we must see Christ's resurrection as the *transformation* not the denial of Spirit-filled σάρξ, into a pure state of πνεῦμα that does not dispense with corporeality, as Gnostics would claim. The resurrection brings no crude transition from σάρξ to πνεῦμα, but the transformation of Christ's obedient, Spirit-filled σάρξ into a bodily existence of a wholly new order. The resurrection is Christ's Spirit-empowered transition from σῶμα ψυχικόν to σῶμα πνευματικόν.

In the all-surpassing glory of His resurrection victory, Christ the firstfruits secures a future far beyond garden fellowship. Ἀνακεφαλαιῶσις reorders creation not by restoring that which was, but by transforming it through the death and resurrection of Him in Whom all things cohere. The Firstborn from death accomplishes creation's renewal precisely as One assuming flesh, who both belongs and yet transcends this present order. The incarnate Word bankrupts the Gnostic claim that flesh cannot attain incorruption. Instead He comes precisely to *fulfil* the creative purpose of God, 'that He might demonstrate the resurrection of the flesh and be pre-eminent'.⁸⁴ His resurrection, in Westcott's words 'stands...midway between the seen and the unseen: it belongs equally to the spiritual and to the material order, and it reconciles both'.⁸⁵ He who is in heaven the Firstborn of the Father becomes on earth firstborn of the virgin. He who is the Author of life becomes Firstborn from the dead. It is He who brings to pass creation's 'rest', since 'the light of Christ's resurrection is the light of the Christian sabbath',⁸⁶ anticipated by the never-ending seventh day. The project is beautifully illustrated in Irenaeus' parable-like reading of Jonah,

So also, from the beginning, did God permit man to be swallowed up by the great whale, who was the author of transgression, not that he should perish altogether when so engulfed; but, arranging and preparing the plan of salvation, which was accompanied by the Word, through the sign of Jonah...that *man, receiving an unhopd-for salvation from*

⁸² Gaffin: *Resurrection*, p110. 'As birth is characteristic of the old aeon, the sarkic world, so resurrection marks the beginning of the new aeon, the eschatological, pneumatic world', p112.

⁸³ Gaffin, p109.

⁸⁴ *Demonstration* §39, p65.

⁸⁵ B.F. Westcott: *The Gospel of the Resurrection*, London: Macmillan, 1884, p10.

⁸⁶ Moltmann: *God in Creation*, p7 [Genesis 2:1-3]. We enter this 'day' by finding rest in Christ (Matthew 11:28, Hebrews 4:1-13).

God, might rise from the dead, and glorify God, and repeat that word which was uttered in prophecy by Jonah: 'I cried by reason of my affliction to the Lord my God, and He heard me out of the belly of hell'.⁸⁷

In all his voracious hunger the devil unwittingly devoured Adam, that the Word might accomplish a more glorious salvation through the sign of Jonah.⁸⁸ In Him Adam's children glorify God as both created *and* redeemed, to be conformed at last into their Master's glorious Image. Here is an accomplished project conceived 'εν ἀρχῇ, leaving O'Donovan rightly calling Christ's resurrection 'a new affirmation of God's first decision that Adam should live, an affirmation that goes beyond and transforms the initial gift of life'.⁸⁹

The eschatological transformation of the cosmos is secured in advance by the Son's own transition from death to resurrection. On the third day, He in whom creation coheres becomes the firstfruits of a new order. At a time when eschatology is widely in vogue, Irenaeus challenges both Church and world to view the future through a *Christological* lens, since to discuss 'end-times' without reference to Him is to dabble in conjecture. The human story in truth belongs to two men. The first Adam is ψυχὴ ζῶσα, and through death and resurrection the last Adam becomes πνεῦμα ζωοποιόν, the eschatological Man (1Corinthians 15:45).⁹⁰ It is Christ's resurrection body, perfectly constituted by the Spirit, which announces material creation's glorious future.⁹¹ The resurrected Christ proleptically reveals our own eschatological body of glory.

Ascension as Exaltation

If Christology must propel our understanding of the eschatological hope, our reflections cannot end at resurrection. For if the resurrection vindicates the Man Jesus as both Messiah and Divine Son, the ascension publicizes His *universal* exaltation. Irenaeus notes the distinction, recalling on numerous occasions the Father's Psalm 110 invitation to His Son, to enter into the joy of His obedience.⁹² For the ascension reverses Christ's κένωσις through incarnation to death, as the faithful Adam offers His Father the true sacrifice of a perfect life. At the ascension the Father receives His Son as obedient High Priest and atoning sacrifice,⁹³ culminating a journey of descent inaugurated by His conception in the virgin's womb. Once again Irenaeus invites us to apprehend Christ's ministry in all its fullness, 'the ascent of the Word made flesh is to be

⁸⁷ Italics mine, 3.20.1, p450.

⁸⁸ Matthew 12:39-42, 16:4, Luke 11:29-32.

⁸⁹ O'Donovan: *Resurrection*, p14.

⁹⁰ Gaffin sees in 1 Corinthians 15:46 'a compressed overview of history', *Resurrection* p83.

⁹¹ Gaffin also sees 2 Corinthians 3:17 describe Christ as life-giving Spirit ('the Lord is the Spirit because he *became* life-giving Spirit', p96).

⁹² 2.28.7, 3.6.1, 3.10.5, 3.16.3, 4.33.11, *Demonstration* §48-9, 85.

⁹³ Hebrews 2:14-3:6, 4:14-5:10, 7:26-8:13, 9:11-15, 10:1-14.

understood only in terms of the descent of the Word to assume that flesh. None of these episodes from incarnation to ascension is considered in isolation from the others'.⁹⁴ As preached by the recurring apostolic refrain,⁹⁵ Christ's journey to the cross finds answer in His reception at the Father's right hand. The ascension thus completes Christ's movement from one course of the heavens to the other,⁹⁶ marking His exaltation beyond the victory of resurrection. Davies for one highlights this Irenaeian distinction, by helpfully differentiating Scripture's language of resurrection (ἐγείρω/ἀνίστημι) from ascension (ἀναβαίνω/ὑπερυψόω).⁹⁷ Having answered Psalm 24's call for an obedient Adamic Priest, the ascended Christ is invited into His rightful inheritance. Only He may ascend the Divine hill, an eternal Priest according to Melchizedek, empowered with an indestructible life.

We might therefore say Christ's ascension inaugurates His cosmic Lordship. Once received into heaven by the angelic chorus, He takes His seat beside His Beloved Father in what is His enthronement, the completion of His mission, fulfilling the nuptial promise of an eternal Kingdom.⁹⁸ The ascension inaugurates Christ's rule beyond His vindication as Divine Son, in a Christological distinction all-too-often overlooked.⁹⁹ Moreover it is clear that recapitulation *requires* this event, as the Christ who has completed His circuit of creation now fills all things as Head of the cosmos, bringing all rebellious powers into subjection to Himself. His Kingship proclaims YHWH's victory, the universal subjection of all things to Christ, as all God's enemies fall under His feet.¹⁰⁰ For in the ascension, Christ takes up the all-conquering place of honour, the seat of cosmic Judge. The point is powerfully expressed in John's apocalyptic vision,

For this reason the same person is the Judge of the living and the dead...For no-one was able, either in heaven or in earth, or under the earth, to open the book of the Father, or to behold Him, with the exception of the Lamb who was slain, and who redeemed us with His own blood, receiving power over all things from the same God who made all things by the Word, and adorned them by [His] Wisdom.¹⁰¹

The Firstborn from the dead, received by the Father, unravels history as the Judge of all flesh.

⁹⁴ MacKenzie: *Irenaeus*, p215.

⁹⁵ 'You killed Him, but God raised and exalted Him' (Acts 2:23-4, 34-36, 3:14-15, 4:10-11, 13:27-30).

⁹⁶ Psalm 19:4b-6. Interestingly, Paul adapts Deuteronomy 30:13 LXX (θάλασσα) to ἄβυσσος in Romans 10:7, highlighting the 'depths' of Christ's self-humbling prior to exaltation.

⁹⁷ J.G.Davies: *He Ascended into Heaven*, London: Lutterworth, 1958, p28-34.

⁹⁸ Psalm 24:7-10, 4.33.13, *Demonstration* §84, Hebrews 1:3, 1:8 [Psalm 45:6], 5:9-10.

⁹⁹ At times for example Harris wrongly brackets Christ's exaltation with His resurrection, *Resurrection*, p84-5 (Acts 2:32-3, Romans 8:34, Ephesians 1:20, 2:6, Colossians 3:1, 1 Peter 1:21).

¹⁰⁰ Psalm 2:8-9, 110:1-4, 1 Corinthians 15:25, Philippians 2:9-11, 1 Peter 3:18-22, Ephesians 1:22, 4:8.

¹⁰¹ 4.20.2, p488 [Revelation 5:1-10].

Ascension in the Flesh

To appreciate how Christ's ascension furthers the Divine intent for Adam's offspring is to acknowledge Christ's exaltation as the exaltation of *flesh*. After all, the incarnate Son never 'sheds' His Adamic nature on His return to the Father. At one level, the true Man's ascension is His bodily assumption to heaven. Yet it is far more. For the incarnate Christ brings *Adamic life*, not merely a physical body, to the Father. In the ascension of Christ, humanity enters the Father's Presence. The Son of God made Son of man exalts Adamic life as never before, accomplishing the promise of Divine-human fellowship.

Irenaeus' majestic pronouncement starkly contravenes Gnosticism's vociferous denials regarding the future of flesh. For Gnostics, concerned to maintain a veneer of orthodoxy, present a saviour who ascends to heaven though not *in the flesh*, lest his heavenly body be tainted by σάρξ. What is more, the ascended Christ enriches himself with holy souls after they too 'have laid aside their mundane flesh'.¹⁰² Gnostic ascension thereby propounds a movement *away* from material, earthly existence towards an immaterial, transcendent, 'spiritual' plane. In heavenly ascension the saviour, though never truly human, casts off His fleshly disguise. This Gnostic concern to divest the Saviour of genuine Adamic life during His 'spiritual translation' is not without Christian counterpart. At times, the Church presents a Saviour whose earth-bound humanity is but a temporal accommodation to our problematic creaturely existence, an unfortunate transitory mode discarded by the ascended Christ as He withdraws from view. This leaves a somewhat Eutychian figure, whose humanity is conveniently engulfed by his Divinity in the act of ascension, restoring him to timeless transcendence beyond all creaturehood. The 'inferior' nature of Christ concedes to the 'superior', in a movement often mirrored by the pilgrimage ascent of the human soul beyond the constraints of material existence. So Origen interprets the resurrection as the *deification* of Christ's human nature, 'truly, after His resurrection, He existed in a body intermediate...between the grossness of that which He had before His sufferings, and the appearance of a soul uncovered by such a body',¹⁰³ as the ascension is re-interpreted allegorically in terms of spiritual exaltation rather than physical motion. Similarly Augustine sometimes refashions Christ's ascension in terms of the *believer's* own world-denying psychology.¹⁰⁴ Most problematic is his tendency to separate the *eternal* from the *incarnate* Christ, as if the incarnate Word cannot overcome the imposed antithesis between time and eternity; 'as far as our progress to beatific vision is concerned, Augustine's Neoplatonic understanding of eternity and God's immutability forces him to leave the humanity of Christ at the threshold'.¹⁰⁵ Such Christological conceptions only distance us from the

¹⁰² I.30.14, p357.

¹⁰³ Origen: *Against Celsus*, Bk 2.62, p456.

¹⁰⁴ Augustine *Sermons* §246, §264 in Farrow: *Ascension*, p118-120.

¹⁰⁵ Doyle: *Eschatology*, p112, 103-4, Augustine: *Confessions*, 11.8.10.

ascended Son *of man*, consequently fuelling our need for alternative mediation. Farrow for one argues persuasively that a Gnostic-like neglect of ascension in the flesh so undermines Jesus' real humanity in branches of the Western church, that His mediatorial office is transferred to His more 'approachable' virgin mother, who delivers to believers the benefits of her distant Son.¹⁰⁶ The emerging tendency to subjectivize redemptive events comes home to roost in such as Hegel, who interprets Christ's resurrection-ascension as the *Church's* introspective reading of Divine glory at the cross. Ascension, now fashioned by *our* hands, is nothing more than 'a discourse on the dead Christ'.¹⁰⁷ This subordination of redemptive events to personal interpretation simply repeats the Gnostic preference for individualist experience over universal truth, for transcendent over tangible, for 'spiritual' over 'material', for timeless over historical.

Irenaeus answers the threat, by proclaiming 'the ascension into heaven *in the flesh* of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord'.¹⁰⁸ Here again is an implicit reprimand to our Church, whose practical subordination of ascension theology to 'matters indifferent' leaves us tied to Gnostic traditions. The bishop reminds us that the real event of Christ's ascension is *necessary*; for it is here that Adamic life is promoted to the Father's right hand. In fact Ascension is the Father's affirmation of Incarnation. Jesus Christ is 'one and the same, to whom the gates of heaven were opened, *because of His taking upon Him flesh*'.¹⁰⁹ To deny the ascension as the Father's acceptance of His Son as Son *of man* would be to posit a Gnostic saviour constituted by different 'aeons' at different times. A Saviour whose flesh is *shod* rather than *transformed* would deny the fullness of redemption. Irenaeus by contrast sees heaven receive Christ precisely *because* He transforms Adamic life through incarnation and resurrection. He descends,

To those things which are of the earth beneath, seeking the sheep which had perished, which was indeed His own peculiar handiwork, and ascend to the height above, offering and commending to His Father that human nature...which had been found, making in His own person the firstfruits of the resurrection of man.¹¹⁰

This journey is integral to ἀνακεφαλαιώσις, since the ascended Christ raises fallen man,

Above to the highest heaven, to the right hand of the glory of the Father, as God had promised, by the prophets, saying, 'I will raise up the fallen tabernacle of David,' that is, the flesh [descended] from David: and our Lord Jesus Christ truly accomplished this, gloriously achieving our salvation, that He might truly raise us up...for the Father.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Farrow: *Ascension*, p153-4.

¹⁰⁷ Farrow, p186.

¹⁰⁸ *Italics mine*, 1.10.1, p330. See also Tertullian *On the Resurrection*, chap 51.

¹⁰⁹ *Italics mine*, 3.16.8, p443.

¹¹⁰ 3.19.3, p449.

¹¹¹ *Demonstration* §38, p64.

In the ascended Christ, Adamic life sits in heaven, 'the presentation to the Father of the firstfruits of that nature which had been assumed.'¹¹² The relation between man and God established by the hypostatic union in the Son becomes an abiding reality. Though fallen Adam descends the mountain garden of God, and would-be priests and kings are barred from the Holy of holies and snatched from their thrones at death, the Ascended One is proclaimed both High Priest and King, fulfilling the destiny of man, as His self-offering at the Cross is received on high.¹¹³ Jesus Christ descends to assume flesh, transforms that flesh through resurrection and ascends to the Father in transformed flesh, that He might redeem human life. As Moule points out, the ascension presents Christ's risen body as the organic linking of this first order with another, confirming 'that Christ was not somehow "dematerialized" like a sort of ghost, but that He is fully Himself, although no longer limited by "earthly" existence'.¹¹⁴ Or in the words of Brian Horne,

The person of Jesus Christ is the historical manifestation of such perfect co-inherence of the natural and supernatural. His human life is perfectly 'completed' by his life as the Word of the Father. So human nature is not changed into some other substance by being supernaturalized, it achieves its true end.¹¹⁵

The goodness of creation and redemption seamlessly combine in Him. For here is the project complete: humanity assumed into God, Deity indwelling Adamic life, and through resurrection-ascension flesh perfected by the Spirit, and welcomed by the Father to the seat of honour.

This is Christ's eternal priesthood on behalf of Adam's sons, secured in the power of His indestructible life (Hebrews 5:1-10). In the ascension language of Hebrews, He who is both Priest and Offering at the cross brings Himself through the heavenly curtain into the Father's Presence (Hebrews 2:17, 9:11-12, 10:12), 'opening to believers an entrance into heaven'.¹¹⁶ Christ now reigns as High Priest in the true sanctuary and throne-room of God (Hebrews 8:1, 9:24), interceding for His people before the Father (Hebrews 7:25, 10:19-22, Romans 8:34), by virtue of His life as Son of Man. The Lord enters heaven as our eternal Head. As Member of our race, He assumes *us* in His flesh, that His death might be our death, His resurrection our resurrection, His ascension our ascension.¹¹⁷ In O'Donovan's words, 'our life, given back to us in Jesus' resurrection from the dead, has been granted its place at the right hand of the throne of God'.¹¹⁸ For *He* is our intercession, prompting Jesus' post-resurrection words to His disciples, ἀναβαίνω πρὸς τὸν πατέρα μου καὶ πατέρα ὑμῶν καὶ θεόν μου καὶ θεόν ὑμῶν (John 20:17).

¹¹² Davies: *He Ascended*, p129, 180.

¹¹³ Daniel 7:13-14, Farrow: *Ascension*, p25-8, 34.

¹¹⁴ C.F.D.Moule: 'Expository Problems: the Ascension – Acts 1:9', *ET*, vol 68, 1957, p205-9, [p209].

¹¹⁵ B.Horne: 'Beyond Tragedy'. *Preaching the Ascension*, I, *Theology*, vol 94, 1991, p168-73, [p173].

¹¹⁶ Davies: *He Ascended*, p67.

¹¹⁷ Ambrose says 'for it was not merely one man but the whole world that entered in the Person of the All-Redeemer', *On the Christian Faith*, 4.1.7 p263, in *NPNF*, 2nd series, ed P.Schaff/T.H. Wace, vol 10, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976.

¹¹⁸ O'Donovan: *Resurrection*, xiv.

He the Head, now reconciled to the Father, guarantees the reconciliation of His Body.¹¹⁹ He the Crop, ripened and reaped into the House of God, secures the ingathering of the whole.¹²⁰ This is Christ's intercession, captured memorably by Swete,

The intercession of the Ascended Christ is not a prayer, but a life. The New Testament does not represent Him as an *orante*, standing ever before the Father, and with outstretched arms...and with strong crying and tears pleading our cause in the presence of a reluctant God; but as a throned Priest-King, asking what He will from a Father who always hears and grants His request. *Our Lord's life in heaven* is His prayer.¹²¹

Yet to see Christ's ascension prefigure our own final journey is an ambiguous claim. Christ of course is ἀρχηγός and τελειωτής of the faith. But our eschatological hope does not *mirror* His ascension, as suggested for one by Harris, 'human nature...is to be exalted from earth to heaven. Assumption to heaven *is the destiny of redeemed humanity*'.¹²² Such eschatology conflates the ascension with a future far from this earth, describing creation's τέλος in incorporeal terms. Interestingly Irenaeus never concedes to such Gnostic themes, since he refuses to see ascension as the consummated creation. The Spirit indwells the incarnate Christ, transforming His flesh through resurrection, that the exalted One might be the first Man to enter heaven. But His bodily transformation to σῶμα πνευματικόν has not yet happened for His people. The ascension hope secures not final relocation, but reconciliation to the Father. It is the assurance of fellowship for the *souls* of believers, proposed by Irenaeus' prophetic reading of Elisha's floating axe-head, 'this was a sign that *souls* should be borne aloft...through the instrumentality of wood, upon which He suffered who can lead *these souls aloft* that follow His ascension'.¹²³

Christ's ascension to heaven secures fellowship with the Lord, not bodily resurrection. In the present heaven Christ possesses His σῶμα πνευματικόν, whilst His people await their investment. The bishop acknowledges Scripture's distinction between death and consummation, whereby incorporeal souls enjoy fellowship with Christ prior to παρουσία, in anticipation of the cosmic hope.¹²⁴ Indeed the point must be made more strongly. The contemporary trend to commingle the ascension hope with our eschatological destiny risks falling straight into the Gnostic trap Irenaeus so carefully avoids. Once our hope amounts to 'spiritual souls in heaven', we propound a teaching with uncanny resemblance to typical Gnosticism, 'Christ sitting down at the right hand of his father Ialdabaoth, that he may receive to himself the souls of those who have known them...*after they have laid aside their mundane flesh*, thus enriching himself'.¹²⁵

¹¹⁹ Augustine is memorable here: 'the going before of the Head is the hope of the members' (*Sermo* 265); 'be a member of Him who alone has ascended. For the Head with the rest of the members is one Man' (*Sermo* 91).

¹²⁰ Exodus 23:19, 34:26.

¹²¹ H.B.Swete: *The Ascended Christ*, London: Macmillan, 1916, p95.

¹²² Italics mine, Harris: *Raised immortal*, p93, Davies: *He Ascended*, p67.

¹²³ Italics mine, Fragment XXVIII, p573.

¹²⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:8, Philippians 1:23-24, 1 Thessalonians 5:10.

¹²⁵ Italics mine, 1.30.14, p357.

The Irenaean future means not ascension, but Him ‘who shall also come in the same flesh in which He suffered, revealing the glory of the Father’.¹²⁶ The Christ who has glorified Adamic life will one day *leave* heaven, that the dwelling of God might be here with Adam’s children. The ascension hope is the exaltation of flesh. But not even this hope encapsulates the τέλος to come, that is the resurrection of the body.

Raised by the Spirit

We have seen how Irenaeus, rigorously upholding Genesis 2:7’s account of Adam’s creation, forbids the body the inherent power of life. In his words, ‘our bodies are raised not from their own substance, but by the power of God’.¹²⁷ Flesh lives only by ongoing dependence upon the Spirit. The sinless Son of Man has authority to lay down and take up His life (John 10:17), but the promised conquest of death still depends upon the Spirit. For the Spirit indwells the Son’s Adamic life, then raises that life on the third day, transforming Christ’s body into σῶμα τῆς δόξης. Through the resurrection, the Spirit ‘perfects’ Christ’s obedient flesh according to the Father’s will, bringing to pass the firstfruits of new creation. The cosmic project is centred upon the Son, but the Spirit secures bodily transformation.

In fact on several occasions Irenaeus highlights the Spirit’s work of raising the Christ,¹²⁸ even as the apostle regularly describes the Son as *Object* of the resurrection.¹²⁹ The Father raises His Son by means of the Spirit. The truth is splendidly pronounced in Romans 1:3–4, which describes not simply the contrasting ages of σὰρξ and πνεῦμα (since the Spirit already indwells σὰρξ throughout Christ’s incarnation),¹³⁰ but also the Spirit’s transformation of Christ’s σῶμα ψυχικόν into His resurrected σῶμα πνευματικόν. 1Peter 3:18 speaks similarly. This transformation of Christ’s flesh confirms the Father’s welcome, ‘Christ’s exaltation in the realm of the Spirit, the heavenly order, the new age, is his justification’.¹³¹ The Spirit as Agent of the Resurrection performs the Father’s will, confirming the Son’s transformed life as the pattern for new creation.

But the Spirit is not only active in raising the Christ. For the God who brought back His Son by the Spirit will similarly raise Christ’s people. In Irenaeus’ words, ‘it is also by this Spirit that the resurrection comes to believers, the body receiving back again the soul and, together with it,

¹²⁶ 3.16.8, p443.

¹²⁷ 5.6.2, p532.

¹²⁸ 5.6.2, 5.7.1, 5.10.2.

¹²⁹ Acts 13:30, 17:31, Romans 4:24, 8:11, 10:9, 1 Corinthians 6:14, 15:15, 2 Corinthians 4:14, Galatians 1:1, Colossians 2:12.

¹³⁰ Suggested by Gaffin: *Resurrection*, p104–112 [footnote 82–3]. Gaffin however does unmask the Nestorian flavour of Reformed theology’s tendency to read Christ’s two natures into these verses (p103).

¹³¹ Gaffin: *Resurrection*, p121.

is raised by the power of the Holy Spirit and is led into the Kingdom of God'.¹³² Schep is therefore right to say that 'the resurrection of Jesus Christ is not only the basis on which the resurrection-hope of the believers rests, but it is also the pattern of their resurrection.'¹³³ The resurrection of the Son will be patterned in His people. What proves true for the firstfruits holds good for the entire harvest (Philippians 3:21, 1Corinthians 15:44). The indissoluble connection reminds us how our eschatological hope can only ever be *Christological*. The Spirit as perfecting Cause of creation proleptically consummates His work in the Son, that Christ might be the ἀπαβών of a transformed creation. In the words of Colin Gunton,

The One through Whom the Father perfects the creation, by raising Jesus from the dead, makes Jesus the centre of the restoration of the fallen cosmos. The cosmos hereafter achieves its destiny insofar as it is gathered to Him.¹³⁴

Giver of the Spirit

Having seen how the resurrected Son is enthroned as eternal Priest-King in His ascension, the One raised by the Spirit now pours out that same Spirit upon all flesh as mark of His royal authority. In Moltmann's words, 'Jesus, from being an object of the Spirit's activity, becomes the subject of the sending of the Spirit on to the church'.¹³⁵ The Spirit who proleptically secures the new creation through Christ's resurrection thus extends the fruits of καὶνὴ κτίσις to the ends of the earth, as He is poured out by the ascended Christ. This is no unexpected phenomenon. For the Christ who declares the Feast of Tabernacles fulfilled in the outpoured Spirit has long foretold events through His prophets,

He who prepared the new way of godliness and righteousness, also called rivers to flow abundantly, sowing the Holy Spirit upon the earth, just as He promised, by the prophets, to pour forth the Spirit upon the face of the earth in the last days.¹³⁶

Christ's heavenly ascension heralds a fresh dispensation in the Divine οἰκονομία, that is the promised renewal of the covenant. The glorified Christ grants the Spirit 'to all as the Father wills',¹³⁷ even to the Gentiles. The Word, uniting the Spirit to Adamic life, pours out the Spirit upon His own,

¹³² *Demonstration* §42, p67, 5.6.2 (1 Corinthians 6:14), 5.10.2 (Romans 8:11), 5.7.1, p532.

¹³³ Schep: *Resurrection Body*, p107.

¹³⁴ Gunton: *Christ and Creation*, p63-4 (2 Corinthians 1:22).

¹³⁵ J.Moltmann: *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993, p122-3.

¹³⁶ *Demonstration* §89, p94 (John 7:37-39, Isaiah 44:3).

¹³⁷ 5.18.2, p546, 3.11.8, 4.33.15, *Demonstration* §6, §7, §91 (Isaiah 17:6-8).

These things...He recapitulated in Himself: by uniting man to the Spirit, and causing the Spirit to dwell in man, He is Himself made the head of the Spirit, and gives the Spirit to be the head of man.¹³⁸

At work in prophets and patriarchs, the Spirit is poured out at Pentecost to proclaim the renewal of the covenant in the eternally anointed Man. The Water of life, forever sustaining the people of God, is poured afresh to irrigate the barren extremities of the earth.

What Irenaeus rightly discerns is that this new dispensation in the one οἰκονομία must *follow* the Son's ascension to the Father. It is Christ's enthronement as Priest-King that is 'the necessary prelude to the descent of the Spirit'.¹³⁹ For according to Schep, 'it is in his risen, incorruptible, and immortal body of flesh that Jesus Christ in heaven exercises his all-embracing authority and performs his heavenly ministry as the exalted King, Priest and Prophet of the Church'.¹⁴⁰ The outpoured Spirit proclaims His rule, as Gentiles are called alongside Jews to the obedience of faith.¹⁴¹ For Jesus is בֵּית־אֱלֹהִים, the Temple of God destroyed yet rebuilt in three days, from which the Spirit flows for the healing of the world, 'bringing different tribes to unity, and offering to the Father the first-fruits of all nations'.¹⁴² By the Spirit the ruling Christ embraces distant lands, transforming peoples into His own Image, as Luke presents the resurrection-ascension as prelude to the Spirit-empowered mission of the apostolic Church. John too connects the gift of the Spirit to Christ's ascension and exaltation,¹⁴³ confirming Pentecost as 'the visible manifestation of a coronation'.¹⁴⁴

Most importantly, the 'spiritual' man is not divested of flesh. For the Spirit indwells the lives of Adam's children reborn into Christ. Those who are τέλειος - perfect and mature - are also πνευματικός (1Corinthians 2:6-16), having received the Spirit of God *whilst remaining in the body*, 'they being spiritual because they partake of the Spirit, and not because their flesh has been stripped off and taken away'.¹⁴⁵ To be 'spiritual' is thus to be conformed into the Image of God Jesus Christ, who has perfected flesh in His own resurrection. Conformity to Him means living *in the body*, with a Spirit-empowered freedom to fully obey the Father. To become πνευματικός 'does not take place by a casting away of the flesh, but by the impartation of the Spirit',¹⁴⁶ in fulfillment of the promised renewed covenant. The Spirit both empowers Jesus to live obediently in Adamic flesh, and perfects that flesh by raising Him from the dead. The same Spirit engenders καινή κτίσις in all who receive the Christ, that they too might become πνευματικός, not by the shedding of their body, but by submitting their Adamic nature, in the

¹³⁸ 5.20.2, p548. Thus the mark of Christian obedience is to live by the Spirit (Romans 8:1-17).

¹³⁹ Davies: *He Ascended*, p63 (Acts 2:33).

¹⁴⁰ Schep: *Resurrection Body*, p165.

¹⁴¹ Romans 1:5, 8:9, 15:18, 16:26, Acts 2:37-9.

¹⁴² 3.17.2, p444 [John 2:19-22, Ezekiel 47:1ff, Revelation 22:1ff].

¹⁴³ John 7:37-9, 14:16-17, 16:7, 20:17.

¹⁴⁴ Ferguson: *Holy Spirit*, p86.

¹⁴⁵ 5.6.1, p531.

¹⁴⁶ 5.8.1, p533, Ephesians 1:13, *Demonstration* §90 (Jeremiah 31:31-4).

Spirit's power, to the will of the Father. Thus the Spirit continues His work of perfecting the flesh.

The Spirit as Bringer of Life

Throughout our study we have seen how Irenaeus' Pneumatology, whether exploring the creation, the virgin conception, the Son's incarnate life, the resurrection or indeed the regeneration of believers, depicts the Spirit as the Perfecter of life in creation and redemption, ἀρχαῖα and καινὴ κτίσις. As the Father always accords life through the Son and by the Spirit, so the Spirit in accordance with the Father's will secures both the life of the Son and creation's future in the Son. The Spirit is the Bringer of life.

Irenaeus regularly substantiates the claim, presenting the Spirit as the One who renews humanity in the Son, according to the Father's good pleasure,

Wherefore He did also descend upon the Son of God, made the Son of man, becoming accustomed in fellowship with Him to dwell in the human race, to rest with human beings, and to dwell in the workmanship of God, working the will of the Father in them, and renewing them from their old habits into the newness of Christ.¹⁴⁷

As the Breath of God sustains Adam, so the Spirit seals communion with the last Adam, bringing life to Christ's people the Church. Gnostics may claim to be spiritual, but their denial of such teaching confirms they drink from a different source,

Those...who do not partake of Him...are neither nourished into life from the mother's breasts, nor do they enjoy that most limpid fountain which issues from the body of Christ; but they dig for themselves broken cisterns out of earthly trenches, and drink putrid water out of the mire, fleeing from the faith of the Church lest they be convicted; and rejecting the Spirit, that they may not be instructed.¹⁴⁸

For only by the Spirit may we know Christ the Life, in a threefold 'ascending' pattern of revelation, where the Spirit brings knowledge of the Son and the Son knowledge of His Father,

Those who bear the Spirit of God are led to the Word, that is to the Son, while the Son presents [them] to the Father, and the Father furnishes...incorruptibility. Thus, without the Spirit it is not [possible] to see the Word of God, and without the Son one is not able to approach the Father; for the knowledge of the Father [is] the Son, and knowledge of the Son of God is through the Holy Spirit.¹⁴⁹

The Spirit of God, as Bringer of life, is continually at work from creation through human salvation, the streams of living water gently vivifying and giving increase to mankind, in the

¹⁴⁷ 3.17.1, p444.

¹⁴⁸ 3.24.1, p458.

¹⁴⁹ *Demonstration* §7 p44, Fragment XXVI.

renewed covenant.¹⁵⁰ He is the garment worn to the Wedding Supper, ‘the food of life [eternal]’,¹⁵¹ permeating the lives of Christ’s people; ‘the Spirit is not given to *create* the new reality, since in the exaltation of the Christ the new reality has been given its decisive form; but he is given to bring that new reality to bear upon the old’.¹⁵² The Spirit, in Cullmann’s words, ‘is operative in the present as the power of the resurrection’,¹⁵³ fanning our longing for the coming inheritance.¹⁵⁴ He is after all the ‘life-giving’ Spirit,¹⁵⁵ fructifying a barren earth,

Neither could we, being many, be made one in Christ Jesus without the water from heaven. And as dry earth does not bring forth unless it receive moisture, in like manner we also, being originally a dry tree, could never have brought forth fruit unto life without the voluntary rain from above.¹⁵⁶

Fruitfulness comes through Him who brings the inner man’s progressive renewal.¹⁵⁷

In distinctly Irenaean speech, the Spirit prepares us for incorruption as we grow in our calling to Divine relationship, ‘but we do now receive a certain portion of His Spirit, tending towards perfection, and preparing us for incorruption, being little by little accustomed to receive and bear God’.¹⁵⁸ The Divine breath animating Adam never encapsulated humanity’s hope, since the project of creation entails the transition from breath to Spirit, psychic to spiritual. Breath leaves the body at death, ‘but when the Spirit pervades the man within and without, inasmuch as it continues there, it never leaves him’.¹⁵⁹ The transition unravels once more the threefold pattern, whereby the triune God is seen,

Prophetically through the Spirit, and...adoptively through the Son; and He shall also be seen paternally in the kingdom of heaven, *the Spirit truly preparing man in the Son of God*, and the Son leading him to the Father, while the Father, too, confers [upon him] incorruption for eternal life.¹⁶⁰

The Spirit therefore works always towards completion not dissolution, restoring glory to a fallen creation. We remember Basil’s description of the Spirit as *perfecting* Cause, who effects creation’s τέλος by establishing the new world in the resurrected Jesus, securing its prophetic anticipation in the Church. In Gunton’s words,

¹⁵⁰ 4.20.10, 4.33.14 (Jeremiah 31:31-2, Ezekiel 36:26, Isaiah 43:19-21).

¹⁵¹ 4.36.6 [Matthew 22:11-14], 4.38.2, p521.

¹⁵² O’Donovan: *Resurrection*, p140.

¹⁵³ Cullmann: *Christ and Time*, p236.

¹⁵⁴ 2 Corinthians 1:22, Ephesians 1:13-14, Romans 8:23, 2 Corinthians 5:1-5.

¹⁵⁵ Galatians 6:8, Romans 8:2,10, 2 Corinthians 3:6.

¹⁵⁶ 3.17.2, p445.

¹⁵⁷ 3.33.1 [1 Corinthians 2:15], 3.17.3 [Luke 10:25-37, Matthew 25:14-30], Titus 3:5, Romans 12:2, Ephesians 3:16, 4:23, 2 Corinthians 4:16.

¹⁵⁸ 5.8.1, p533.

¹⁵⁹ 5.12.2, p537, 5.12.1.

¹⁶⁰ Italics mine, 4.20.5, p489.

The purpose of the Father achieved by the incarnation, cross and resurrection of the incarnate Son has its basis in the creation by which the world took shape, and will find its completion in the work of the Spirit who brings the Son's work to perfection.¹⁶¹

The Spirit is the Bringer of life, working fruitfulness and incorruption for those in Christ.

To summarize this fourth chapter, we have explored how the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ is the exaltation of Adamic flesh. In this Man raised from the dead, the Spirit particularizes the future, by transforming the old creation crucified on the tree into the prototypically new creation, accomplishing in turn not the negation of the body, but its transformation into a new exalted order. For the resurrection and exaltation of Christ (anticipated throughout Scripture) vindicates Him as Messiah and Divine Son, declaring His righteousness before the Father and the inherent goodness of His obedient bodily life, in proleptic anticipation of the resurrection of all in Him. Our eschatology is dictated by *Christological* events. Moreover Christ's ascension to the Father's right hand is not the shedding of Adamic flesh, but the Father's glorious acceptance of perfected humanity into His throne-room. The exaltation of Christ is *Trinitarianly* conceived, unmasking a widespread monist tone to our popular theology. For it is the Spirit who resurrects the incarnate Christ, bringing to 'perfection' the heavenly Man and promising in Him a creation transformed. This majestic work of the Divine Son, in the power of the Spirit for the good pleasure of the Father, invites us, along with Isaiah and Paul, to taunt the final enemy - κατεπόθη ὁ θάνατος εἰς νῆκος!¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Gunton: *Atonement*, p154, p170. Elsewhere, Gunton says, 'crucial here is the eschatological action of the Spirit, his enabling of created things to become what they are by anticipating what they shall be, a function inaugurated and instantiated by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead', *Theology through the Theologians*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996, p149.

¹⁶² Isaiah 25:8, 1 Corinthians 15:54.

CHAPTER 5: 'THE REDEMPTION OF CREATION'

The Man of Heaven as Firstfruits of the Earth

This hand of God which formed us at the beginning, and which does form us in the womb, has in the last times sought us out who were lost, winning back His own, and taking up the lost sheep upon His shoulders, and with joy restoring it to the fold of life. (5.15.2)

We began our study by exploring in detail Gnosticism's delight to dis sever the material and spiritual, the human and Divine, the earth and the heavens, this world and the next. Most relevant to our question, we have seen how Gnostic theology advances a *rupture* between creation and redemption, establishing an unbridgeable chasm between the unredeemable material cosmos and the preordained escape of the πνευματικοί from all that pertains to this shady earthly life. History records how these premises have infiltrated Christian theology. In reply we have heard Irenaeus denounce such teaching, and implicitly refute its repeated expressions within the Church, as something diametrically opposed to the εὐαγγέλιον preached by prophets and apostles. For Gnosticism divides what the one οἰκονομία θεοῦ so readily holds together. Instead Scripture's gospel advocates the *redemption* of this first creation, the buying back of that which has been enslaved, fulfilling the triune God's purposes for the heavens and earth created ἐν ἀρχῇ. Redemption *accomplishes* the Divine purpose for creation. This Irenaean perspective, we suggest, is needed at a time when Gnostic-like divisions of creation and redemption are most apparent, though often manifest in contrasting ways. Thus whenever the Church argues for a cosmic universalism, it risks quashing all distinctives between creation and redemption, denying any meaningful relationship between the two. On the other hand, the Church can often extend the promise of 'salvation' only as liberation of human existence from this sinful place. Here redemption is so extrapolated from creation that any dynamic relationship between them is practically denied. Irenaeus by contrast offers a richer, more subtle presentation of the relationship, which neither crumples creation and redemption into one-another, nor abstracts redemption from the first order. At the risk of mixing metaphors, this fifth chapter 'recapitulates' some of the ground covered thus far, reaffirming the Irenaean perspective that defines redemption as the original Divine intent for the first creation, and arguing for the Church's need to recapture such a view.

It is therefore ironic that Irenaeus has been seized upon to advance an evolutionary *auto-redemptive* cosmology. In the hands of such as Hick, the bishop has been deliberately interpreted through this infamously opaque lens, in attempts to give credence to spurious

eschatological claims.¹ But Irenaeus expounds no such Hegelian-like hope. Instead what might be called his 'theology of maturation' stubbornly refuses to circumvent the cosmic dislocation wrought by Adam's fall. Redemptive maturation works *despite and against* this cosmic disorder. The Adamic motif ensures the transition from dislocation to matured redemption occurs in *real history*. There is a man called Adam, whose childish rebellion instigates the Fall of creation. There is a Man called Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whose mature obedience secures the liberation of the fallen world. Creation, fall and redemption are real events, standing against an a-temporal evolutionary eschatology, which is in truth simply the *aggiornamento* of a Gnosticism Irenaeus was passionately refuting.

Irenaeus by contrast can speak of redemption as the πλήρωσις of creation, not because he denies the historicity of cosmic dislocation, but because He perceives in the one οἰκονομία the Man of heaven's *eternal* mediation as both Creator and Redeemer. If the Son were not also Agent of creation, His work of redemption would be instigating a *different* project, the (albeit benign) invasion of a foreign land. The unity of the economy therefore rests upon the same Word as Agent of both works. The Father creates and redeems *through* His Son, in grace far surpassing the conquest of Adam's Fall. Redemption fulfils the intended purpose precisely because the Son is both ἀρχή and τέλος, uniting in His Person the End with the Beginning, ensuring that creation itself is a movement towards πλήρωσις, the banishment of darkness by the Light of the eternal Mediator. It is as if Scripture's opening word בְּרֵאשִׁית (recalled in John 1:1) acts as both temporal reference and pledge that creation comes through Him who is and will be its Head. The Divine act יְהי אור (Genesis 1:3) is a word of judgement upon the darkness, inaugurating a project completed in Light.² Redemption includes salvation *of* the cosmos, whereby the overcoming of Adam's historical rebellion serves to illumine the destined glories of the Man of heaven.

The Gospel therefore is less a Divine solution to sin, more a proclamation of the Creator-Redeemer. For Christ 'is the Mediator of both creation and re-creation',³ the Ground of all the Father's actions towards the world. He is not primarily the Divine 'answer' to Adam, since this would distance Him from the project's hub. Rather, Adam is the distorted mirror of *Christ*. His beauty, manifest in the obedience that brought Him to Calvary, is universally displayed in His resurrection from death, when the Father appoints Him as firstfruits of the earth, ἀρχή of a new creation. His ministry proves eternally fruitful, since His Person guarantees both the distinction and the continuity between first and new order. In Torrance's words,

¹ See chapter 2, p57, footnotes 154, p64, 211-2.

² Πληρώω (occurring 86x in NT) denotes fulfilment of the Divine plan, both Christologically (Christ fulfils the prophets' words) and temporally (God achieves His purposes in the fullness of time), R. Schippers: 'Fullness' in *NIDNTT* ed C.Brown, Carlisle: Paternoster, 1986, vol 1, p728-41.

³ Wolters: *Creation Regained*, p21.

Irenaeus thinks of the economic activity of God as one in which He binds together creation and redemption, the temporal and the eternal, in the **permanent actualization** of the divine will within a renewed creation centred in and gathered up in the incarnate Son.⁴

The work of salvation secured in His own deliverance from death presumes His authority as He through Whom the Father created all things. Otherwise He could save only those lost in a *foreign* land. The Christ on Calvary, upholding the sun and moon with outstretched arms, reigns from the tree,⁵

Christ is the Mediator of salvation because He is also the Mediator of creation. The universality of the significance of the cross is therefore based in the universality of the activity of the Word, reaffirmed and realised by the Spirit in the resurrection of Jesus from the tomb.⁶

The Man of heaven is the firstfruits of the earth, the ever-fruitful ἀρχή of both original and new creation.

Christ the True Man by the Spirit

We have observed how Irenaeus avoids promulgating an a-temporal auto-redemptive cosmology, by interpreting salvation history through the historical lens of first and last Adam. In fact to reinterpret Irenaeian ἀνακεφαλαίωσις a-temporally is simply to forget recapitulation has this Adamic motif at its heart. The Adam-Christ theme underpins the whole systemic enterprise, as anthropology becomes the story of two men. This theme is no convenient literary-allegorical device employed to circumscribe the wealth of biblical material. Instead Adam and Christ are two men *of history*, whose prospective lives define the history-bound shape of the cosmos. The Irenaeian account has much in common with the apostle, who similarly summates creation's story.⁷ So in the great resurrection chapter, Paul says ὥσπερ γὰρ ἐν τῷ Ἀδὰμ πάντες ἀποθνήσκουσιν, οὕτως καὶ ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ πάντες ζωοποιηθήσονται (1Corinthians 15:22). The bishop presumes the historicity of both men. Indeed the recapitulation theme cannot simply act as literary device, lest the 'myth' of Adam becomes in turn the 'myth' of Christ.⁸ It is these two men's *historicity* which guards against the Gnostic-like cosmology of such as Teilhard de Chardin, where an a-historical transcendent Christ draws the cosmos into a path of universal progress, the formation of his mystical body. Such a saviour, neither incarnate nor historically defined, becomes the divine soul of a divinized creation.⁹

⁴ Torrance: *Divine Meaning*, p120.

⁵ Wainwright: *For our Salvation*: p156.

⁶ Gunton: *Atonement*, p169.

⁷ Romans 5:12-21, Philipians 2:6-7, 1 Corinthians 15:20-22,42-50.

⁸ Arguing against the theological liberalism of his day, Cullmann rejects the implicit a-temporality of Bultmann's 'myth', interpreting the story of Adam as 'revealed prophecy concerning history', *Christ and Time*, p98.

⁹ Farrow: *Ascension*, p202-5.

Of course to consider Christ as pattern of the first man would be to place the proverbial cart before the horse. For we know that Romans 5:14 acknowledges Adam as τύπος, pattern of the Man to come. Adam resembles the *eternal* Image of God, Jesus Christ. For *Christ* is the true Man, proclaimed by His copy in advance of His coming. Adam, from whom all peoples descend (Acts 17:26), begets through disobedience a cataclysmic fall, inadvertently pronouncing himself the antithesis of the true Man, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, born of a virgin, Son of His copy. Such a vista ensures Biblical history is never a-temporal, for it moves ever forward towards the future Man of whom Adam is but a sketch, 'the figure of Him that was to come'.¹⁰ History can never be an endless cyclical return. There is a movement towards the coming One, a progression from Adam to Christ, from copy to reality, from first man to Last. Anthropology derives from the true Man not the copy, the last Adam not the first,

To see the true Man as a complete reality in the present, the believer can look only to Christ the Lord, who as Last Adam is the man God intends all men to be. Christology cannot be dissolved into anthropology; rather anthropology is derived from Christology.¹¹

The true Man *must* enter earthly history once-for-all, for only when the Image of God becomes man, will man as image of God be seen. A disordered creation awaits the promised Son, to find its goal in Him, authenticating the passage of time called History,¹²

This Word was manifested when the Word of God was made man, assimilating Himself to man, and man to Himself, so that by means of his resemblance to the Son, man might become precious to the Father. For in times long past, it was *said* that man was created after the image of God, but it was not [actually] *shown*: for the Word was as yet invisible, after whose image man was created.¹³

Man is precious to the Father *because he resembles the Son*. Creation after all is rooted in the love between Father and Son. And Adam can only know himself once the true Image is revealed. The Word of God, eternal Man, after whose Image man was made, unites Himself to His own τύπος, that His τύπος might come to know Him who is the Life, and thus know himself. Though not absolving Adam of culpability, it is this progression of Christological revelation which both underpins and propels the project of creation.

The historical movement from copy to reality, from Adam to Christ, is a recapitulation conveyed in both parallel and contrast. Irenaeus highlights the analogous genesis of both men, one drawn from virgin soil, the other from a virgin womb. Similarly both men generate

¹⁰ 3.22.3, p455.

¹¹ Scroggs: *Last Adam*, p59.

¹² Genesis 3:15. Is Eve too hasty in expectation: אִשׁ אֶתְיָהוּהָ (Genesis 4:1)? The debate hinges on whether אֶת marks the direct object or acts as preposition.

¹³ 5.16.2, p544.

descendants, Adam begets sons in his likeness and Christ begets sons in His.¹⁴ Furthermore the day of Christ's death recalls the day of Adam's birth, as the Son of Adam,

Underwent His sufferings upon the day preceding the Sabbath, that is, the sixth day of the creation, on which day man was created; thus granting him a second creation by means of His passion, which is that [creation] out of death.¹⁵

Yet anthropological parallels find their clearest expression in Christ's incarnation. For neither Adam nor Christ is born of human seed, both require the hand of God upon virgin earth and virgin womb. Moreover 'dust' must be juxtaposed with 'womb', lest an identical formation leaves Christ beginning *another* race. Had Christ been formed from dust, He would no longer be the Son *of Adam*. In other words,

If the former was taken from the dust, and God was his Maker, it was incumbent that the latter also, making a recapitulation in Himself, should be formed as man by God, *to have an analogy with the former as respects His origin*. Why, then, did not God again take dust, but wrought so that the formation should be made of Mary? It was *that there might not be another formation called into being*, nor any other which should [require to] be saved, but that the very same formation should be summed up [in Christ as had existed in Adam], *the analogy having been preserved*.¹⁶

This is not a question of aesthetics, of literary construction, but of what is requisite for salvation. For all humankind is bound to death through disobedience, as fleshly children of Adam. Similarly Incarnation brings not a literary but a *literal* connection, since 'the Lord, recapitulating this man, received the same arrangement...of embodiment...as this one...that He might also demonstrate the likeness of embodiment...to Adam.'¹⁷ And if the breath of life animated the man of dust, so in Jesus Christ 'the Spirit of God...united with the ancient substance of Adam's formation, rendered man living and perfect, receptive of the perfect Father'.¹⁸ This union of man and Spirit in the Person of the Christ brings more than artistic harmony. It is the promise of a redeemed creation.

Alongside recapitulative parallels stand numerous Adamic antitheses. The true Man for example, in contrast to His τύπος, secures life through perfect obedience, 'as by one man's disobedience sin entered, and death obtained a place through sin; so also by the obedience of one Man, righteousness having been introduced shall cause life to fructify in those...who in times past were dead'.¹⁹ The man deceived by Satan is released by Him who conquers Satan,

As the first Adam became a vessel in...(Satan's) possession, whom he did also hold under his power...by bringing sin on him iniquitously...wherefore he who had led man captive,

¹⁴ Genesis 5:3, Romans 8:29, 1 Corinthians 15:49, 2 Corinthians 3:18.

¹⁵ 5.23.2, p551.

¹⁶ Italics mine, 3.21.10, p454, 3.22.1.

¹⁷ *Demonstration* §32, p61.

¹⁸ 5.1.3, p527.

¹⁹ 3.21.10, p454 [Romans 5:19].

was justly captured in his turn by God; but man, who had been led captive, was loosed from the bonds of condemnation.²⁰

The τύπος bound by death finds life in the true Man from heaven,

In order that, as our species went down to death through a vanquished man, so we may ascend to life again through a victorious one; and as through a man death received the palm [of victory] against us, so again by a man we may receive the palm against death.²¹

The obedient Son of man exemplifies in advance the promise of Divine fellowship, the dwelling of God with men, 'Jesus is at once the realisation of the communion of Creator with creature and of creature with Creator'.²² As both Lord and Son of Adam, His story is the destined story of all His handiwork, the hope of creation.

In similar though somewhat modified form, Barth also knows the Man from Nazareth as the Father's pattern for creation. We have already noted connections between the two theologians.²³ Certainly Irenaeus could repeat Barth's words on Christ, that 'in His single Person God, man, and the history between them are completely present'.²⁴ Inasmuch as Adam is only τύπος of the true Man, he would also concur with the view that 'Jesus' history is world history; the human nature which is exalted in Him is our nature. We have no other'. For 'as He lives divine and human self-realization occur together as one event'.²⁵ Yet since Irenaeus' conception of Manhood pre-dates the incarnation, he would not say of the Word that 'God is the reconciling God and *man the reconciled man*'.²⁶ For the begotten Son as eternal Man needs no reconciliation with His Father. Barth's supralapsarianism is embedded in the primacy of the concrete historical incarnate Christ. Yet for Irenaeus it lies in the pre-incarnate Man of heaven, meaning the bishop escapes Jenson's charge against Barth of collapsing God's living history into one eternal point-event, an abstraction. Irenaeus sidesteps the danger by seeing the eternal Word *become* flesh, in a progression of His Being towards σαρκῶσις. It is this Christological point of distinction between the two which Farrow appears to overlook, when he says of the Irenaean Christ, 'He stands at the center of the economy of creation *as the incarnate One*, and at the center of the economy of redemption as the crucified and risen One, the descending and ascending One'.²⁷ Here Farrow appears to read Irenaeus through Barth, rather than seeing the one οἰκονομία depend upon the *Person* destined for σαρκῶσις, not the incarnate Christ Himself. Yet crucial to both theologians is that man is chosen ἐν ἀρχῇ for the purpose of sharing Christ's victory over sin, ensuring, unlike much popular contemporary Christology, that 'at the very

²⁰ 3.23.1, p456.

²¹ 5.21.1, p549, 5.17.1.

²² Gunton: *Atonement*, p199, *Triune Creator*, p169.

²³ Chapter 2, p46, footnote 58, chapter 3, p75, footnote 29, p87, footnote 106.

²⁴ Barth: *Church Dogmatics* 4/3, p161.

²⁵ Barth: *Church Dogmatics* 4/2, p269, 4/3, p40.

²⁶ Italics mine, Barth: *CD* 4/1, p158.

²⁷ Italics mine, Farrow: *Ascension*, p111.

beginning the doors were shut against all ultimate dualism in God's eternal decision'.²⁸ Redemption is the πλήρωσις of the original creation.

We have already seen how the project unfurls in the progressive maturation of the Word made flesh, as the new Adamic life initiated at Christ's conception finds its glorious end in bodily resurrection,

For the Lord, having been born 'the First-begotten of the dead,' and receiving into His bosom the ancient fathers, has regenerated them into the life of God...having been made Himself the beginning of those that live, as Adam became the beginning of those who die.²⁹

Christ's resurrection secures the transformation. The Seed that dies is raised from death, to bear a fruitful harvest, becoming in Sauter's words the 'Seed of God's new world'.³⁰ In the ascension Christ's transformed spiritual body goes ahead of us, the firstfruits of the harvest brought into the house of God.³¹ This perspective differs somewhat from Augustine, who describes the change more as *heavenly imposition* rather than earthly transformation, saying that Christ 'came from heaven to be clothed in a body of earthly mortality, so that He might clothe it in heavenly immortality'.³² Irenaeus by contrast sees bodily transformation as the Spirit's workings upon earth, securing paradigmatically in Christ a transformation *from within* the first order, leaving Scroggs to say that 'the eschatological age has been inaugurated by a Man who embodies God's intent for all men – an intent thwarted by the first Adam, fulfilled by the Last'.³³ The resurrected Christ is the Seed of God's new world; 'having been hidden in the heart of the earth in a tomb for three days, and having become a great tree, [He] has stretched forth His branches to the ends of the earth'.³⁴

It is this destined bond between firstfruits and harvest, the promise that one day we will share Christ's glorious body even as we have shared the body of Adam (1Corinthians 15:20-22, Philippians 3:20-1), that makes certain accounts of Christ's resurrection body curiously uninviting. Harris for one sees Christ's resurrection state as essentially *immaterial*, the apparently inevitable consequence of being freed from the spatial limitation of this present order, as if only *this* world defines corporeal existence. Concerning the resurrection appearances to His disciples, Harris introduces unnecessary ambiguities, when saying of Christ, 'what He wished them to understand by touching was not that He was material but that He was real'. His body ate only 'for evidential reasons...although it no more required food to sustain strength than it needed rest to regain strength'. Moreover Mary is chided not for failing to

²⁸ Jenson: *Alpha*, p39, *Church Dogmatics* 3/2, p142.

²⁹ 3.22.4, p445 [Revelation 1:5, 1 Corinthians 15:20-2].

³⁰ G.Sauter: *Eschatological Rationality*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996, p164 [John 12:24].

³¹ Davies: *He ascended*, p172 [Exodus 23:19, 34:26].

³² Augustine: *City of God*, 2.13.23, p539.

³³ Scroggs: *Last Adam*, ix.

³⁴ Fragment XXXI, p573.

apprehend the need for Christ's ascension, but because 'her spiritual relationship with Him was not to be compromised by preoccupation with the physical' (John 20:17).³⁵ These would be quotations to grace a Gnostic text! For here is the telltale division of physical and spiritual, material and real, with its implicit denial of corporeal continuity in the promise of eschatological transformation. Resurrection life may appear material, but its materiality is practically branded illusory. Such a view denies Christ's resurrection its God-given right to act as interpretative key to the physical order. Far better is Oscar Hardman's view, 'Christianity rests upon the Incarnation and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, *in which there is a conjunction of spirit and matter of such a nature as to declare the reality of each*, and in which their reconciliation is duly effected'.³⁶

We may therefore say that if true humanity begins to be seen at the incarnation, Adam's destined future is revealed at the resurrection. Christ may raise the dead, because 'our Lord is Himself the resurrection, as He does Himself declare, "I am the resurrection and the life"'.³⁷ The Image of God beheld at Incarnation is glorified in the conquest of death. The promise is more than a Beatific Vision. It is *participation* in Christ's own eschatological Image, presenting once more a picture of redemption as the πλήρωσις of creation. The true Man stands in transformed glory, exemplifying the future of the cosmos, uniting all things in Himself. This is the heart of ἀνακεφαλαίωσις, Ephesians 1:10's union of creation and redemption. For Irenaeus, even Luke's genealogy marking the generations between Adam and Christ suggests the theme, 'implying that it is He who has summed up in Himself all nations dispersed from Adam downwards...together with Adam himself'.³⁸ This vision of reordering creation into its Head includes restoring the members to right relation with one-another, fulfilling the Divine promise through Noah to the post-diluvium world,

He, appearing in these last times, the chief cornerstone, has gathered into one, and united those that were far off and those that were near; that is, the circumcision and the uncircumcision, enlarging Japhet, and placing him in the dwelling of Shem.³⁹

His work is not to abolish but to complete the Law and Prophets, 'for by His advent He Himself fulfilled all things, and does still fulfil in the Church the new covenant foretold by the law, onwards to the consummation [of all things]'.⁴⁰ Indeed recapitulation *requires* the Redeemer to be Creator, for only the Creator can fill all things in the work of redemption. The original Architect must reorder His handiwork. Creation was always to be בְּרֵאשִׁית, in the Head. It is for

³⁵ Matthew 28:2,6, John 20:19,26, Luke 24:31,36, Harris: *Raised Immortal*, p53-5.

³⁶ Italics mine, Hardman: *Resurrection*, p63.

³⁷ 4.5.2, p467 [John 11:25-6, 5:21,24-6, 6:39-40,44,54].

³⁸ 3.22.3, p455.

³⁹ 3.5.3, p418.

⁴⁰ 4.34.2, p511 [Matthew 5:17-18, Ephesians 4:10-16]. Christ is 'the *telos* of the covenant', Ferguson: *Holy Spirit*, p142.

this reason that Irenaeus insists Christ's ministry embraces the rebel from whom all others derive,

Inasmuch as man is saved, it is fitting that he who was created the original man should be saved. For it is too absurd to maintain, that he who was so deeply injured by the enemy, and was the first to suffer captivity, was not rescued by Him who conquered the enemy, but that his children were, - those whom he had begotten in the same captivity.⁴¹

Through His resurrection-ascension, the Son enthroned refashions the cosmos around Himself. His task now complete, He is declared πρωτότοκος; Firstborn of both original and new creation (Colossians 1:15,18),⁴² the Spirit-filled Agent of all the Father's plans. Though flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom, Christ's body transformed in resurrection heralds a new cosmic order. 'The totality of humanity and the universe is recapitulated in Christ',⁴³ prompting Benoît to say 'le thème de l'économie englobe celui de la récapitulation...ce n'est pas seulement Adam que le Christ va récapituler, c'est *omnia*, toutes choses'.⁴⁴ 'Ανακεφαλαίωσις means the coherence of all things around the incarnate Word, the glorified Christ directing the cosmos to its future in Him.

Most importantly, Irenaeian redemption cannot be viewed as the *restoration* of the original world. For the resurrection of Christ proclaims a new order secured in the Spirit, continuous with the old yet of much finer glory. To label redemption a mere restoration denies any dynamism to the project. It fails to grant broader purpose to Adam's fall, depicting at best a tragedy Divinely overcome. It implicitly discards a maturing anthropology. It tends to neglect the growing wisdom of the incarnate Son, as He learns obedience to the Father. It knows no progression in the communion between God and man. Yet the movement from Adam to Christ far surpasses the contrast of disobedience and obedience, of anthropological defeat and subsequent victory. It is not the annulment, but the transformation of this present order of flesh and blood. It is the promise of ψυχικός Adam saved by πνευματικός Christ,

Because the Word, the Maker of all things, had formed beforehand for Himself the future dispensation of the human race, connected with the Son of God; God having predestined that the first man should be of an animal nature, with this view, that he might be saved by the spiritual One.⁴⁵

This distinction is borne out by John McHugh's fourfold view of Irenaeian recapitulation, where each strand forms an essential aspect of the whole. Adam is initially recapitulated through the virgin conception, his call to obedience is recapitulated through Christ's maturing life, his defeat is recapitulated through Christ's resurrection-ascension, his τέλος is complete in Christ's

⁴¹ 3.23.2, p456.

⁴² Πρωτότοκος, meaning first in time and superior in status, retains notions of 'headship/supremacy' (Harris: *Raised*, p112).

⁴³ Osborn: *Irenaeus*, p116.

⁴⁴ Benoît: *Saint Irénée*, p227.

⁴⁵ 3.22.3, p455.

παρουσία.⁴⁶ Each strand conveys a sense of new beginning, the promise not of restoration but *transition*, whereby the Holy Spirit possesses the soul, regenerating the human spirit in communion with God. The projected transition is the Divine purpose, the path to fruitfulness, the augmentation and expansion of human life, not the negation of material existence,

As the engrafted wild olive does not certainly lose the substance of its wood, but changes the quality of its fruit, and receives another name, being now not a wild olive, but a fruit-bearing olive...so also, when man is grafted in by faith and receives the Spirit of God, he certainly does not lose the substance of flesh, but changes the quality of the fruit...of his works, and receives another name, showing that he has become changed for the better, being now not [mere] flesh and blood, but a spiritual man.⁴⁷

Irenaeus redemption does not *restore* the first creation. This would entail a cyclical history, whereby the Preacher's lament of life *וְהָיָה כְּהַיְתָא* would describe not creation under judgement, but creation itself!⁴⁸ Redemption in Christ is no repetitious recapture of what was lost, Wolters' 'restoration of an original good creation'.⁴⁹ It is the qualitative transition from psychic to spiritual.

This means that Adam, even in innocence, was not τέλειος. Though without sin, he was not yet 'perfect', in its proper sense of mature and complete. The τύπος could not mirror the true Man without his own history. In this sense his Fall, though decidedly tragic with the intrusion of sin, did not entail a lost 'perfection'. In fact by choosing death, Adam unwittingly preached the glories of the spiritual Man, in whom he and all his offspring could find their future. In Christ the substance of flesh is not discarded (even as His own flesh and blood were not disowned in resurrection-ascension). Instead this present order is transformed by the indwelling Spirit,

This same, therefore, was what the Lord came to quicken, that as in Adam we do all die, as being of an animal nature, in Christ we may all live, as being spiritual, not laying aside God's handiwork, but the lusts of the flesh, and receiving the Holy Spirit.⁵⁰

The project has already come to pass in the one Man. For 'in His body of glory Christ is true humanity, the realization of that existence the Christian will himself have one day'.⁵¹ Through cross to resurrection, He becomes the Firstborn of a new order, securing the transition from 'natural' to 'spiritual', ψυχικός to πνευματικός. As the flesh presently partakes of animated life

⁴⁶ J. McHugh: 'A reconsideration of Ephesians 1:10b in the light of Irenaeus', in *Paul and Paulinism*, London: SPCK, 1982 [p302-9]. Consequently McHugh prefers to render recapitulation by the Latin 'instaurare'.

⁴⁷ 5.10.2, p536.

⁴⁸ 'וְהָיָה כְּהַיְתָא' is the summary refrain throughout Ecclesiastes' post-lapsarian world (1:9,14, 2:11,17-22, 3:16, 4:1-3,7,15, 5:13,18, 6:1,12, 8:9,15-17, 9:3,6,9,11,13, 10:5).

⁴⁹ Wolters: *Creation Regained*, p11.

⁵⁰ 5.12.3, p538. 1 Corinthians 15:45-6 is a favoured Irenaeus passage. Similarly Augustine, though prone to confusing material creation and sin, most helpfully asserts on this occasion, 'the good and true Mediator has shown that it is sin which is evil, not the substance or nature of flesh, since that substance could be assumed with a human soul and preserved free from sin, and could be laid aside in death and changed into something better by resurrection', (*City of God* 1.10.24, p405).

⁵¹ Scroggs: *Last Adam*, p92.

by the breath of God, so in Christ it will partake of vivified life by the Spirit, bringing to pass the dynamic movement from creation to redemption,

The breath, then, is temporal, but the Spirit eternal. The breath, too, increases [in strength] for a short period, and continues for a certain time; after that it takes its departure, leaving its former abode destitute of breath. But when the Spirit pervades the man within and without, inasmuch as it continues there, it never leaves him.⁵²

The apostle Paul summates this movement as one εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν/εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν. The first Adam, forfeiting life for all in him, finds a new order of life in the Last. The transition is by no means accidental (τὸ ψυχικόν, ἔπειτα τὸ πνευματικόν, 1Corinthians 15:45-6). The Fall takes its place in the projected journey from living soul to quickening Spirit. Recalling words already quoted,

It was necessary, at first, that nature should be exhibited; then, after that, that what was mortal should be conquered and swallowed up by immortality, and the corruptible by incorruptibility, and that man should be made after the image and likeness of God, having received the knowledge of good and evil.⁵³

Bousset however denies the possibility of such transition, placing instead ψυχικός and πνευματικός in direct antithesis. Christ brings not the transformation but the destruction of this first creation. He *intrudes* upon this world, no longer saving it from within but securing what appears a characteristically Gnostic redemption,

Christ is not the fulfillment but the death of the natural man. Creation and redemption threaten to tear apart completely, and this sharp division is continued through the whole world in which the redemption has become a reality. Like someone *who comes from another sphere, the pneumatic appears over against the psychic*.⁵⁴

Bousset therefore sees no integrated project, no dynamic movement from original to new. The two orders face interminable conflict, the pneumatic set against the psychic. And yet bodily resurrection, at least for Jesus Christ, comes on the *third* day, when according to Scripture His self-offering has *not yet* seen decay.⁵⁵ In Christ's experience the death of the old means not its destruction, but its *transition* to the new. Of course for Adam's offspring the *délai* between death and resurrection is somewhat longer! But for Christ's people, death too brings not extinction but transformation. The body, unlike that of Christ, does decay. But the person (as we shall come to see) continues, albeit eschatologically incomplete. Neither is Bousset right to accuse the apostle of positing intractable conflict between σὰρξ and πνεῦμα, as when he says 'for Paul the sarx of Christ is something temporarily assumed, a burden from which He is finally freed by death'. Astonishingly Bousset cites 5.14.3 in his defence, where Irenaeus

⁵² 5.12.2, p538.

⁵³ 4.38.4, p522 [1 Corinthians 15:53], chapter 3, p79, footnote 54.

⁵⁴ Italics mine, Bousset: *Kyrios*, p199.

⁵⁵ לֹא־תָתִין חֲסִידֶךָ לְרֵאוֹת שָׁחַת (Psalm 16:10). Interestingly, offerings made to the Lord remain 'clean' until the third day. In the Lord's sight, it is only *then* that corruption sets in (Leviticus 7:17-18, 19:6-8).

argues precisely the *contrary* ('if the Lord had taken flesh from another substance, He would not by so doing have reconciled that one to God which had become inimical through transgression').⁵⁶ Paul is falsely charged with sowing the Gnostic seeds Irenaeus refused to water, 'what Irenaeus eliminated from the theology and thought-world of Paul consisted of all the points of beginning which ultimately led to Gnosticism'.⁵⁷ In truth, Bousset has simply read the apostle through Gnostic eyes, failing to appreciate Paul's multilayered use of the term σάρξ, which as summary of all Adamic life sometimes denotes 'sinful nature' opposed to the Spirit (Romans 8:1-17, Galatians 5:16-23), and at other times conveys bodily existence (1Corinthians 15:39, 2Corinthians 12:7, Colossians 1:24). Fallen nature is destroyed in Christ, but corporeal existence is transformed.

Perhaps Cullmann's objection has a little more credence, when he sees Irenaeian recapitulation so centred upon 'fulfilment', that the dislocation wrought by the Fall becomes understated. This however introduces too artificial an antithesis between 'fulfilment' and 'redemption'. Recapitulation after all incorporates both, betraying the injustice of the following charge,

It is characteristic of Irenaeus...that he emphasizes almost exclusively the idea of *fulfilment* to the neglect of the idea of *restoration*. For this reason he speaks of Adam's sin with a certain indulgence, and actually excuses it...Thus Jesus appears in Irenaeian thought as the one who fulfils Adam's deficient work rather than as the one who makes good Adam's sin.⁵⁸

Cullmann implies that the bishop insufficiently expounds Jesus' atonement for Adam's sin, without which the recapitulative task could never be fulfilled. He adds,

Irenaeus did not take seriously enough Adam's sin as an act of revolt. He did not understand that by his sin Adam broke the line of *Heilsgeschichte*, so that it can be continued only when its continuity is restored by the *atonement*.⁵⁹

Certainly Christ's atoning work on Calvary is not the predominant theme in Irenaeus' conception of recapitulation. It could be more developed. In this regard, there are grains of truth in the accusation. Yet the charge is much exaggerated, as has already been argued. The dislocation wrought by Adam in the garden is real, and fulfilment of the project of creation requires the conquest of sin. But in the Irenaeian vista, this victory stretches across the *whole* of Christ's ministry, reaching its fullest though not its exclusory point, at the cross.

Creation and redemption are therefore seen to intertwine in the one οἰκονομία of God, as the tragic fall of Adam, τύπος of the Man to come, propels the movement of history towards the incarnate One. The true Man begins a new generation analogous to the genesis of His copy,

⁵⁶ Bousset: *Kyrios*, p448, quoting 5.14.3, p542.

⁵⁷ Bousset, p451.

⁵⁸ Cullmann: *Christology*, p190.

⁵⁹ Cullmann, p191.

announcing His redemptive work as the πλήρωσις of man's original formation. The Saviour patterns the Creator-creature relationship, exemplifying in His own life the Divine project of God dwelling with men. Creation's transformation comes when He enters His resurrection glory, and enthroned beside the Father He continues the work of drawing all things together in Himself. In Him is a project not of restoration but re-creation, the redemption of psychic man and his transformation from ψυχὴν ζῶσαν to πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν. The perspective suggests that one reason for contemporary confusion in anthropology and eschatology is precisely because the debate is rarely defined *Christologically*. The Adam-Christ motif so central to the Irenaean vision brings to light the fragmentary, atomistic anthropology prevalent today, whereby our forefather Adam is often removed from discussion. Moreover Irenaeus' outlook unmasks the familiar trend of detaching the eschatological hope from the Son's own experience. A failure to see in the resurrected Christ both continuity and transformation will undoubtedly result in muddled thinking regarding the cosmos' future. The hope of 'restoration' for example does not sufficiently explore the distinction between the crucified and resurrected Christ. The longing for some 'distant spiritual home' does not properly engage with Christological continuity. Where Irenaeus succeeds, whether we agree with him or not, is in challenging the Church to define both anthropology and eschatology with reference to Jesus Christ.

Sharing the Experience of Christ

If ἀνακεφαλαίωσις speaks of the ascended King, whose Kingdom will never be destroyed (Daniel 2:44-5), continuing His work of uniting all things into Himself, it is no surprise that He the Head imprints upon His Body the Church the marks of His own cross and resurrection. At a time when Gnostics, the so-called πνευματικοί, lived among Christian communities, Irenaeus insists that the true Church follows her *suffering* Lord, in assurance of the resurrection to come. Abraham lives as earthly sojourner, 'walking as a pilgrim with the Word, that he might [afterwards] have his abode with the Word'. The father of the faith points the way for all Christ's disciples, 'righteously, also the apostles, being of the race of Abraham, left the ship and their father, and followed the Word. Righteously also do we, possessing the same faith as Abraham, and taking up the cross as Isaac did the wood, follow Him'.⁶⁰ Those who have left family and neighbours become a holy priesthood, who like Levi's children find in Him a true inheritance.⁶¹ The Church, refusing the entrapment of riches, follows her beloved Lord, 'for truly the first thing is to deny one's self and to follow Christ; and those who do this are borne

⁶⁰ 4.5.3, 4.5.4, p467.

⁶¹ 4.8.3 [Deuteronomy 18:1, 33:9, Numbers 18:20].

onward to perfection'.⁶² This after all is the apostle's own testimony, ζῶ δὲ οὐκέτι ἐγώ, ζῆ δὲ ἐν ἐμοὶ Χριστός (Galatians 2:20).

United to the true Son, Christ's people no longer live as slaves, but as adopted sons of the Father. And as the one covenant extends, the incarnate Son by no means abrogates Torah, but fills out its application to His disciples. Freedom from the external pattern does not promote lawlessness, for 'the more extensive operation of liberty implies that a more complete subjection and affection towards our Liberator had been implanted within us'.⁶³ This is the mark of a maturing project. So on the Mount Jesus forbids not only adultery but concupiscence, not only murder but anger. Similarly tithing extends to more abundant giving, for 'the offering is now made, not by slaves, but by freemen'.⁶⁴ The true Church is set free to carry out the call to love, since 'the freedom of humanity is now a freedom *for* God, and not a freedom *from* God'.⁶⁵

The true Church, in union with her Lord, shares Christ's sufferings before sharing His glory. The paradox is peculiarly poignant in the light of Irenaeus' martyrdom. Like Stephen, disciples follow their Master's footsteps, 'thus did he fulfil the perfect doctrine, copying in every respect the Leader of martyrdom, and praying for those who were slaying him'.⁶⁶ Gnostic devotees prove unwilling to shed blood, but the Church offers 'a multitude of martyrs to the Father', and echoing the ancient prophets finds herself 'often weakened indeed, yet immediately increasing her members, and becoming whole again'.⁶⁷ Indeed the suffering of the prophets as members of Christ foretell the suffering of the eternal Son, the Head of the Church, 'for just as...the figure of a complete man is not displayed by one member, but through means of all taken together, so also did all the prophets prefigure the one [Christ]'.⁶⁸ Though He is supremely the innocent Sufferer, 'the same [is still true] with regard to us, the body following the example of the Head'.⁶⁹ Thus Peter's confession prompts the Lord to describe discipleship in terms of suffering, 'He did not speak of any other cross, but of the suffering which He should Himself undergo first, and His disciples afterwards'.⁷⁰ The crucified Christ calls His Church to follow, against a Gnostic saviour whose blissful ἀπάθεια could never inspire a martyr's faith. United to his Lord, Paul seeks this γυνῶσις, knowing conformity to Christ's death brings the promise of resurrection.⁷¹ This is Irenaeus' account of the true πνευματικοί, who share the experience of

⁶² 5.22.2, Fragment XXXVI, p574.

⁶³ 4.13.3, p478, 4.13.1-2.

⁶⁴ 4.18.2, p485.

⁶⁵ MacKenzie: *Irenaeus*, p161.

⁶⁶ 3.12.13, p435. Both deaths share numerous parallels (Acts 7:56-57 / Mark 14:61-4, Acts 7:60 / Luke 23:34).

⁶⁷ 4.33.9, p508 [Matthew 5:12]. One remembers Tertullian's time-honoured words 'the blood of Christians is seed', *The Apology*, chap 50, p50, in *ANF*, vol 3, ed A.Roberts/J.Donaldson, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973.

⁶⁸ 4.33.10, p509.

⁶⁹ 4.34.4, p512.

⁷⁰ 3.18.5, p447, 3.18.4.

⁷¹ Philippians 3:10-11. See also Calvin: *Institutes*, 3.10.1 p719.

Christ the Lord, following Him in the way of suffering, living as sons not slaves, in sure hope of final resurrection.

He Comes to His Own

We have continued to explore how creation and redemption are held together in fruitful relation, precisely because the Word of God is Agent of both. This dual work for Irenaeus is always the act of the Father by means of His Son in the power of the Spirit. So when the Word assumes flesh, as John's Prologue makes clear, He comes *εἰς τὰ ἴδια*, to what is already His own. His coming discloses sin in all its blasphemy, whenever His own do not receive Him. But where sin abounds, the grace of adoption abounds all the more (John 1:11-13). Since the eternal Word contains the entire Pleroma, invisibly pervading all things, it is even in the ignominious Cross that we see Christ's cosmic throne, its fourfold dimensions proclaiming to the ends of the earth the Son's universal authority,

Since He is the Word of God Almighty, who invisibly pervades the whole creation, and encompasses...its length, breadth, height and depth – for by the Word of God everything is administered – so too was the Son of God crucified in these [fourfold dimensions], having been imprinted in the form of the cross in everything.⁷²

Christ's consummate glory fashions a common tongue to creation and redemption. Both are dual aspects of His supreme Lordship. Focusing on particular Christological stages, Cullmann speaks similarly,

In the three decisive stages of the Christ-line of salvation the general process is drawn into the redemptive process. It is so in Creation: everything is created through Christ. It is so in Christ's death and resurrection: everything is reconciled through him. It is so in the eschatological completion: everything is subjected to God, who is all in all.⁷³

We know this common tongue of creation-redemption does not deny the blasphemy of sin, but rather announces the mediation of Him who transforms the old into the new. The project is best captured, as already noted, by Irenaeus' allegorical reading of Jonah.⁷⁴ Transgression forms a dark backdrop to future resurrection.

The bishop by no means imposes this common tongue upon the Scriptures. Creation language often lies behind God's redemptive acts. The apostle Paul for example describes salvation as the *creative* act of God; the miracle son Isaac parallels spiritual rebirth (Romans 4:17), the regenerative enlightening of our hearts with knowledge of Christ recalls the gift of light on the

⁷² *Demonstration* §34, p62.

⁷³ Cullmann: *Christ and Time*, p179.

⁷⁴ See chapter 4, p110, footnote 87.

first day (2Corinthians 4:6), the resurrection life of the Spirit is a life of *καὶνὴ κτίσις*, of new *creation* (Galatians 6:15, 2Corinthians 5:17, Colossians 3:10, Ephesians 2:10,15, 4:24). The seventh day, which unlike other days knows no ‘evening and morning’ (Genesis 2:1-3), anticipates a future without end, the eternal Sabbath of a redeemed world.⁷⁵ The word *שָׁבַת* in Psalm 136 for example interweaves the language of creation with redemption from Egypt, as the covenant Lord establishes victory over all His enemies.⁷⁶ The regular prophetic oracles against the nations proclaim the God of Israel as Creator of all the children of Adam.⁷⁷ Watson observes how the intentioned juxtaposition of psalms interweaves YHWH’s cosmic acts with His covenant relationship, forbidding the reading of Psalm 104 as a theology of creation outside Israel’s covenant experience of redemption.⁷⁸ Moreover the common tongue of creation-redemption pervades Isaiah 40-55, with its exceptionally concentrated repetition of *בָּרָא* and *יִצְרָא*.⁷⁹ New redemption from exile recalls the first creation beyond the promise of national renewal,⁸⁰ so that Dumbrell can say, ‘the theology of Isa 40-66 discloses a great reversal in the historical fortunes of Israel, depicted under various figures as nothing less than New Creation’.⁸¹ Perhaps richest of all is the creation-covenant correspondence of Genesis 2:18-25, where the Adam-Eve union finds its central witness in the Son who comes to win His Bride, the Christ and His Church.⁸² What is more, the common tongue can be heard whenever New Testament attestations of Jesus as *κύριος* echo earlier expositions of YHWH as Creator-Redeemer.⁸³ Apostolic accounts of Scriptural texts self-consciously relate *Ἰησοῦς* to YHWH, witnessed on many occasions. Jesus like YHWH vindicates His people, inflicting vengeance on their persecutors (2Thessalonians 1:6-10 recalls Isaiah 2:19-21, 11:4, 66:15). Jesus like YHWH assumes the role of coming Judge (Revelation 2:23, 3:14, 19:11 recall Jeremiah 17:10, 42:5). His title ‘King of kings and Lord of lords’ belongs to YHWH alone (Revelation 19:16, Deuteronomy 10:17).⁸⁴ Such parallelism prompts Kaiser to claim that ‘the fundamental Christian confession “Jesus is Lord” is rooted in the recognition that the risen Christ is Yahweh, the God of Israel’.⁸⁵ Thus the common tongue of creation-redemption not only announces Israel’s God as He who forms and fills the cosmos, but as He who comes to His own in the incarnate Son, who as one Person in the triune Godhead is also named YHWH, active throughout the old and new dispensation of the one covenant, mediating both creation and

⁷⁵ The Sabbath finds its context in both *creation* (Exodus 20:8-11) and *redemption* (Deuteronomy 5:12-16).

⁷⁶ Watson: *Text*, p231. Also Exodus 4:11, 20:11, Amos 4:13, 5:8-9, 9:5-6.

⁷⁷ Amos 1-2, Isaiah 13-23, Jeremiah 46-50, Ezekiel 25-32, Obadiah.

⁷⁸ Psalm 103 declares YHWH’s covenant mercy and forgiveness, 105 praises Him for preserving His people, 106 for maintaining His covenant despite Israel’s rebellion, 107 for His acts as Redeemer (Watson: *Text*, p265-6).

⁷⁹ Isaiah 40:26,28, 41:20, 42:45, 43:1,7,15, 45:7, 48:7, 54:16 (*בָּרָא* in Genesis 1:1). Isaiah 41:25, 43:1,7,10,21, 44:2,9,10,12,21,24, 45:7,9,11,18, 46:11, 49:5, 54:17 (*יִצְרָא*).

⁸⁰ Hubbard: *New Creation in Paul’s Letters and Thought*, Society for NT Studies, Monograph 119, Cambridge: University Press, 2002, p12-23 [Isaiah 65:17-18, 66:22].

⁸¹ W.J.Dumbrell: *The End of the Beginning*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985, p183.

⁸² Barth develops the theme particularly well: *CD III.I*, p288-323.

⁸³ YHWH is translated *κύριος* in LXX.

⁸⁴ See also 1 Thessalonians 3:13 recalling Zechariah 14:5, 1 Thessalonians 4:16 picking up Psalm 47:5, Acts 2:21 and Romans 10:19-23 applying Joel 2:32 Christologically, and Philippians 2:9 repeating Isaiah 45:23.

⁸⁵ C.B.Kaiser: *The Doctrine of God. An Historical Survey*, London: Marshall, Morgan&Scott, 1982, p33.

redemption. Irenaeus challenges the Church to declare Jesus Christ both New and *Old Testament* Lord.⁸⁶

Such close linguistic correlation endorses the Irenaeian creed that holds redemption as the destined τέλος of creation, enabling us to speak, with necessary care, of the 'one event' of covenant-as-reconciliation. The journey to maturity is disrupted by catastrophic reversal. Yet cosmic transformation was never merely the happy outcome, a convenient offshoot of the Divine conquest of sin. Maturation was *always* creation's intended destiny, even despite the tragic Fall, since the ψυχικός could only become πνευματικός through the spiritual Man. In this sense we can speak of the 'one event' of covenant-as-reconciliation. The raison d'être of the incarnation is not simply to undo Adam's foolishness (although of course it achieves this), but fundamentally to prevent the good creation from falling short of its intended glory. The glorified Son begins creation's redirection to its promised future, 'the teleology of the whole creation, past, present and to come is shaped through Christ: begun through Him, reordered to its end through His self-emptying, and directed to Him as its end'.⁸⁷ Redemption is not simply the removal of disorder, but the liberation of the cosmos into a new order. In this light, MacKenzie is right to say, 'creation and incarnation are but the two sides of the one act of the love of God towards what He makes'.⁸⁸ Watson too captures the truth, 'creation and covenant are interdependent, bound to one-another by many connections and analogies, and it is theologically disastrous to separate them or to exalt one at the expense of the other'.⁸⁹ And Wolters employs the memorable image of a child set to mature yet struck with illness, who with the passing of time simultaneously grows while suffering disease, before finding health after many years. In the great Physician's redeeming work, maturation and dislocation coexist in an uncomfortable present. But one day the diseased child will mature and be healed.⁹⁰

This Irenaeian perspective, we have already explored, does differ from Barth's inner and outer basis of the covenant, whereby the 'eternally' incarnate Christ is the *Urgeschichte* of all Divine-human history.⁹¹ For Barth's covenant-as-reconciliation is God's eternal decree to become one with sinful man in the Person of Jesus Christ. Man becomes 'the one whom God loved from all eternity *in His Son*...to whom He gave Himself from all eternity *in His Son*'.⁹² The eternal love of God in Christ is the inner basis of the covenant, with creation externally revealing the reconciliation that has *already* happened in the 'pre-existence' of the incarnate Christ,

⁸⁶ This identification between YHWH and Christ is considered rather more ambivalent by some, cf L.W.Hurtado: *One God, one Lord*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998.

⁸⁷ Gunton: *Christ and Creation*, p97, also Athanasius: *On the Incarnation of the Word*, §6 in *NPNF*, 2nd series, ed P.Schaff/H.Wace, vol IV, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975.

⁸⁸ MacKenzie: *Irenaeus*, p94.

⁸⁹ Watson: *Text*, p241.

⁹⁰ Wolters: *Creation Regained*, p39-40.

⁹¹ Barth: *Church Dogmatics* 2/2, p157-8, 183-4, 3/1, p228-9.

⁹² Italics mine, Barth: *Church Dogmatics* 2/2, p165.

Creation took place in order that man's history might commence and take place as the history of the covenant of grace established between God and himself...creaturelieness, and therefore creation, is the external basis of the covenant of grace in which the love of God for man moves towards its fulfilment.⁹³

Both theologians are rightly supralapsarian, seeing creation and reconciliation as inner determinants of a greater order, thereby insisting that 'grace is not a repair job. It is God's will and the basis of our whole existence'.⁹⁴ But unlike Irenaeus, Barth's unity of creation and reconciliation lies exclusively in the 'eternal' Divine-human unity of the incarnate Jesus Christ. In Jenson's words, 'the possibility of the doctrine of creation lies solely in the unity of creation and reconciliation in the "lifework" of the Son'.⁹⁵ This marks the parting of the two ways. One might suggest that Irenaeian Christology is preferable, since questions remain concerning the apparent 'artificiality' of Barth's eternally incarnate Christ.

Either way, the pillar shared by both, the Word's dual mediation of creation-redemption, enables Irenaeus to present the incarnation as the coming of Christ to His *own* land. He comes not to trespass upon another's property, but to bring blessing to His own possession. So Jaschke can say, 'der Sohn ist wirklich in sein Eigentum gekommen'.⁹⁶ And blessing comes as the Lord *directly handles* His creation, as seen on a hillside and at a wedding,

For although the Lord had the power to supply wine to those feasting, independently of any created substance, and to fill with food those who were hungry, He did not adopt this course; but, taking the loaves which the earth had produced, and giving thanks, and on the other occasion making water wine, He satisfied those...reclining [at table], and gave drink to those...invited to the marriage; showing that the God who made the earth and commanded it to bring forth fruit...was He who in these last times bestowed upon mankind, by His Son, the blessing of food and the favour of drink.⁹⁷

Never *ex nihilo* but always restorative, Christ's miracles confirm the goodness of this first creation. In Hengel's somewhat dispassionate tone, 'Irenaeus' discovery of anti-docetic and anti-enchratic components in the Cana miracle has a certain justification: this miracle simply cannot be reconciled with a dualism that denigrates body and matter'.⁹⁸ So in the temple that patterns the cosmos, Jesus clears of traders not the dwelling of another, but 'reproved those who were putting *His house* to...improper use'.⁹⁹ In a Marcionite world, the Son would simply be tampering with possessions not His own in actions no longer deemed 'good', 'or how can *he* be good who draws away men that do not belong to him from him who made them, and calls them

⁹³ Barth: *Church Dogmatics* 3/1, p219.

⁹⁴ Jenson: *Alpha*, p159, Barth: 'the work of His creative grace has in view His reconciling grace. But the converse is also true', *Church Dogmatics* 4/3, p138.

⁹⁵ Jenson: *Alpha*, p155.

⁹⁶ H-J. Jaschke: *Irenaeus von Lyon: die 'ungeschminkte Wahrheit'*, Rome: Academiae Alfonsianae, 1980, p117.

⁹⁷ 3.11.5, p427.

⁹⁸ M. Hengel: 'The Interpretation of the Wine Miracle at Cana: John 2:1-11' in Hurst/Wright: *Glory of Christ*, p83-112 [p90].

⁹⁹ 4.2.6, p464, italics mine.

into his own kingdom?’¹⁰⁰ Irenaeus therefore makes clear that to restrict Christology only to matters of redemption (as often occurs in the broader Church) is to deny the goodness of Christ, since it leaves Him coveting another god’s property. One must instead acknowledge that He comes to reclaim what is truly *His*,

For the Creator of the world is truly the Word of God...who in an invisible manner contains all things created, and is inherent in the entire creation, since the Word of God governs and arranges all things; and therefore He came to His own in a visible manner, and was made flesh, and hung upon the tree, that He might sum up all things in Himself.¹⁰¹

The reconciling Word has turned swords into ploughshares, spears into pruning hooks, acting righteously upon His own property, by vanquishing the real trespasser.¹⁰² His public declaration of forgiveness to the paralytic is His self-proclamation as the offended Lord, ‘He, the same against whom we had sinned in the beginning, grants forgiveness of sins in the end’.¹⁰³

The Son of God then becomes Son of man, not for covetous love of a neighbouring field but for merciful love of His own handiwork. With every miracle, the Creator Lord representatively liberates the material realm from slavery, healing broken bodies, curing sickness, driving out demons and raising the dead. These are the marks of the Kingdom, as the Word exercises His God-given Lordship over fallen creation,

Jesus’ miracles provide us with a sample of the meaning of redemption: a freeing of creation from the shackles of sin and evil and a reinstatement of creaturely living as intended by God...the healing, restoring work of Christ marks the invasion of the kingdom into the fallen creation.¹⁰⁴

Assuming flesh He ‘extends’ by *experiential* right His sovereign rule upon the earth¹⁰⁵ which, whilst not denying His eternal all-pervasive rule ἐν ἀρχῇ sees Christ’s glory *made* manifest in an obedient life that culminates in authority over death. His eternal power is now *disclosed* to all creation. The hand of God who formed us in the womb seeks us out in our lostness. The Lord who calls out to Adam calls out to us at the eve of history. He who anointed all things in creation is Himself anointed by the Spirit. He who arranged different stages to human life grows in stature as child of Adam.¹⁰⁶ This creation-redemption bond finds its quintessential illustration in the healing of the blind man at Siloam’s pool (John 9). For as the Lord makes clay from spittle, smearing it upon the man’s eyes, He points out the original fashioning of the man from dust by the very same hand,

¹⁰⁰ 4.33.2, p507, 4.18.4, 5.2.1.

¹⁰¹ 5.18.3, p547, 5.18.2 [Ephesians 4:6].

¹⁰² 4.34.4, 5.1.1, 4.24.1.

¹⁰³ 5.17.1, p545 (Matthew 9:1-8, Mark 2:1-12), 5.17.2.

¹⁰⁴ Wolters: *Creation Regained*, p62-3 [Matthew 11:1-6].

¹⁰⁵ As noted in chapter 4, p100, footnote 30.

¹⁰⁶ 5.15.3 [Jeremiah 1:5, Galatians 1:15], *Demonstration* §53 [Psalm 61:1], 2.22.4, 3.4.2, 3.16.6, 3.22.1.

As, therefore, we are by the Word formed in the womb, this very same Word formed the visual power in him who had been blind from his birth; *showing openly who it is that fashions us in secret*...and declaring the original formation of Adam, and the manner in which he was created, and by what hand he was fashioned, indicating the whole from a part. For the Lord who formed the visual powers is He who made the whole man, carrying out the will of the Father.¹⁰⁷

With such miracles, the incarnate Word makes unseen heavenly truth visible upon the earth, confirming His dual mediation. Similarly His outstretched body at Golgotha proclaims His tender embrace of the world,

For it is He who illumines the 'heights', that is, the things in heaven, and holds the 'deeps', which is beneath the earth, and stretches the 'length' from the East to the West, and navigates the 'breadth' of the northern and southern regions, inviting the dispersed from all sides to the knowledge of the Father.¹⁰⁸

Pursuing His handiwork, the Shepherd extends His redemption even to Adam.¹⁰⁹ Humanity's corporate nature may well justify the claim, as the Lord echoes His Garden call in the act of Incarnation, 'for just as at that time God spake to Adam at eventide, searching him out; so in the last times, by means of the same voice, searching out His posterity, He has visited them'.¹¹⁰

Moreover the Word's representative healing of creation becomes the precursor to final resurrection. Arguing persuasively from lesser to greater, Irenaeus reminds us that Christ's miraculous healings are purposeless without a final corporeal conquest of death,

For what was His object in healing [different] portions of the flesh, and restoring them to their original condition, if those parts which had been healed by Him were not in a position to obtain salvation? For if it was [merely] a temporary benefit which He conferred, He granted nothing of importance to those who were the subjects of His healing.

The healing of separate members anticipates the future hope, for resurrection is consummate healing. Physical restoration is the temporal expression of final bodily resurrection, leaving Irenaeus to ask of the Gnostics,

How can they maintain that the flesh is incapable of receiving the life which flows from Him, when it received healing from Him? He, therefore, who confers healing, the same does also confer life; and He [who gives] life, also surrounds His own handiwork with incorruption.¹¹¹

For final resurrection secures the promise that God will heal and restore *this* damaged creation, even as those healed by Christ saw *this* present body restored; 'all who were healed generally did not change those parts of their bodies which had at their birth come forth from the womb,

¹⁰⁷ 5.15.3, p543 [italics mine], 5.15.2, 5.15.4, 5.16.1.

¹⁰⁸ *Demonstration* §34, p62.

¹⁰⁹ 3.19.3, 3.23.1, 5.12.2-3.

¹¹⁰ 5.15.4, p544.

¹¹¹ 5.12.6, p539 (both quotations).

but simply obtained these anew in a healthy condition'.¹¹² Final resurrection completes the healing, since in Wingren's words, 'the resurrection life is not an unnatural addition to what is truly human, but is the uncorrupted life of Creation'.¹¹³ Yet Wingren's apprehension of the necessary continuity between creation and redemption - as when he claims 'the life of the resurrection is the *restored* and uncontaminated life of Creation'¹¹⁴ - risks forgetting the goal is one of *transformation*. In final resurrection, creation is not just restored. When the Word returns to establish true Sabbath rest, the world's present form will pass away (1Corinthians 7:31).

The Irenaean vision of a transformed creation however should not be confused with the formulations of Teilhard de Chardin, whose evolutionary universalism sees all things drawn together towards the Omega point named the 'Christ'. De Chardin speaks of the 'progressive unification of mankind, intensification of collective consciousness, birth of a socialized mankind, and, finally, movement towards the convergent structure of evolution as it seeks out its cosmic centre'.¹¹⁵ Such pronouncements leave Barth rightly branding de Chardin's work 'a giant gnostic snake'.¹¹⁶ For in this vision 'spirit' gradually transcends 'matter', moving all things towards a universal, a-historical, aeon-like Christ, in what is a mutual relation of self-realization,

The world would have no internal coherence were Christ not at hand to give it a centre and to consummate it. Christ, on the other hand, would not be divine if his spirit could not be recognised as underlying the processes which are even now re-creating the soul of the earth.¹¹⁷

Unlike de Chardin, Irenaeus refuses ever to consider the cosmic project as an evolutionary maturation unfettered from a historical Fall, but rather as a broken creation enjoying real victory against the pernicious opposition of Satan. Indeed the enemy's trespassing upon Divine land brings amazement not at the limitation of Divine sovereignty, but at the extent of Divine mercy,

The whole economy of salvation regarding man came to pass according to the good pleasure of the Father, in order that God might not be conquered, nor His wisdom lessened...For if man...created by God that he might live, after losing life through being injured by the serpent that had corrupted him, should not any more return to life, but should be utterly [and for ever] abandoned to death, God would...have been conquered, and the wickedness of the serpent would have prevailed over the will of God. But inasmuch as God is invincible and longsuffering, *He did indeed show Himself to be long-suffering in the matter of the correction of man and the probation of all...*and by means of the second man did He bind the strong man, and spoiled his goods, and abolished death, vivifying that man who had been in a state of death.¹¹⁸

¹¹² 5.12.5, p539, 5.15.4.

¹¹³ Wingren: *Incarnation*, p120.

¹¹⁴ Wingren, p120, 48-9, 173.

¹¹⁵ T.de Chardin: *Toward the Future*, trans R.Hague, London: Collins, 1975, p9.

¹¹⁶ Barth: *Letters* 1961-8, ed J.Fangmeier & H.Stoevesandt, trans/ed G.Bromiley, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981, p117.

¹¹⁷ De Chardin: *Future*, p38.

¹¹⁸ Italics mine, 3.23.1, p455-6.

A real battle rages between God and His adversary for the control of creation. Wolters does not exaggerate with the words, 'to conceive of either the fall or Christ's deliverance as encompassing less than the whole creation is to compromise the biblical teaching of the radical nature of the fall and the cosmic scope of redemption'.¹¹⁹ The unfathomable Divine forbearance towards man, and the Son's triumphant conflict with Satan, underscore a biblical eschatology that sees the transformative redemption of God's original handiwork. Salvation does bring something new.¹²⁰ Christ comes to His own not simply to restore, but to transform.

The Spirit Secures the τέλος

We have seen throughout our study how the Father's gracious will, through His eternally begotten Son, is not achieved without the Spirit. For the Son is *the Christ*, eternally anointed by the Spirit to join the end to the beginning, accomplished prototypically by His resurrection from death. The redeeming of creation requires the Spirit. It is after all the Spirit whose 'adorning' work equips the incarnate Son to be faithful and true before the Father and the world.¹²¹ What is more, with incarnation not only does the Son of God become Son of man, but the Spirit Himself joins Adam's children, replacing life in the old man with life in the New,

In [the times of] the end, the Word of the Father and the Spirit of God, having become united with the ancient substance of Adam's formation, rendered man living and perfect, receptive of the perfect Father, in order that as in the natural [Adam] we all were dead, so in the spiritual we may all be made alive.¹²²

The Spirit therefore perfects creation through the particularity of the Son, argued for example by James Purves, 'the work of the Spirit may be to bring man more deeply into communion with the Son incarnate'.¹²³ Then in the resurrection, the Spirit transforms Jesus' body to the life of the world to come, ensuring the *future* particularity of things, 'their becoming perfect - complete - as distinctly themselves'.¹²⁴ This is how the Spirit orders 'and ultimately beautifies God's creation'.¹²⁵ His work can never be detached from the Man Jesus of Nazareth; Pneumatology cannot lose its Christological moorings. For the Holy Spirit is neither Hegel's nor de Chardin's Absolute Spirit, drawing creation unremittingly to its timeless Gnostic destiny beyond the scope of history. Nor is the Man Jesus Christ merely *one* instance in a world historical process, but is its centre and turning point. Irenaeus thus avoids the dangers of Moltmann's Divine Spirit,

¹¹⁹ Wolters: *Creation Regained*, p71.

¹²⁰ Here contra Wolters, who claims that 'in a very significant sense this restoration means that salvation does not bring anything new', *Creation*, p58.

¹²¹ Gunton: *Triune Creator*, p184 sees the Spirit mediate between the human Jesus and the Father, somewhat against Irenaeus' assertions that both Divine and human relate *together* in the one Person of Jesus Christ.

¹²² 5.1.3, p527.

¹²³ J.G.M.Purves: 'The Spirit and the *Imago Dei*: Reviewing the Anthropology of Irenaeus of Lyons', *EQ* vol 68, 1996, p99-120, [p114].

¹²⁴ Gunton: *Triune Creator*, p143.

¹²⁵ Ferguson: *Holy Spirit*, p22.

prone to participate in the destiny of His own creation without Christological referent.¹²⁶ The lack of Λόγος mediation leaves Moltmann sometimes grasping a quasi-pantheist vision, whereby the evolutionary cosmos becomes an intrinsically open, undetermined reality, 'an irreversible, communicating system open to the future'.¹²⁷ Irenaeus by contrast always locates the Spirit's liberating work in the historically defined Jesus of Nazareth. The Spirit perfects creation through the particularity of the Son.

His task then is to transform the sons of Adam into the true eschatological Man, Jesus Christ. For the Spirit relates Adam's children to all the Word made flesh has accomplished, regenerating believers and forming them into Him who is the true Image, through a continuing process of transformation, 'a once-for-all change of direction...accompanied by daily, progressive renewal'.¹²⁸ It is by the Spirit that Christ prepares His people to live in new covenant freedom and love, as 'we advance in a community of union with God in the incarnate Word towards our ultimate perfection in that image'.¹²⁹ This process of renewal amounts to deification, transforming 'man into the likeness of Him who became Man that men might become divine'.¹³⁰ For the Spirit begets true children of Abraham (Galatians 3:1-5, 3:26-4:7), 'perfecting particulars by relating them to their source and destiny' in Christ.¹³¹ The hope is not for neo-platonic deification, Osborn's '*assimilation* to the Son through the Spirit'.¹³² It is for the perfecting of *the particular*, preserving the diversity of creation, even as the Spirit brings different tribes to unity, 'offering to the Father the first-fruits *of all nations*'.¹³³ Humanity is renewed in knowledge of the Creator, the oldness of the letter superseded by the newness of the Spirit, the νοῦς κυρίου.¹³⁴ The Spirit works for the completion of man.

This understanding of the Spirit as perfecting Cause enables us, with Irenaeus, to foresee the new creation as the eternal *commingling* of flesh and Spirit. The mature are neither freed from the body, nor simply renewed in soul and body, but are newly indwelt by the Spirit, 'for the perfect man consists in the commingling and the union of the soul receiving the spirit of the Father, and the admixture of that fleshly nature...moulded after the image of God'.¹³⁵ True spiritual life means not immateriality, but Spirit-filled flesh. The point is echoed by Cullmann,

¹²⁶ Moltmann: *Creation*, p17, 96.

¹²⁷ Moltmann: p204, 103.

¹²⁸ Hoekema: *Created in God's Image*, p27 [Romans 8:29, 1 Corinthians 11:1, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Ephesians 1:4, 4:22-24, 5:1, Philippians 2:5-11, Colossians 3:9-10].

¹²⁹ MacKenzie: *Irenaeus*, p108, Osborn: 'Love of Enemies and Recapitulation', *VC* 54 No 1 (2000), [p12-31], p13-14, 24-7.

¹³⁰ Osborn: *Irenaeus*, p213.

¹³¹ Gunton: *One, Three, Many*, p212, also Hubbard: *New Creation*, p203-9.

¹³² Osborn: *Irenaeus*, p215.

¹³³ Italics mine, 3.17.2, p444 [Acts 2:36-41, 4:4].

¹³⁴ 5.12.4 [Colossians 3:10, Romans 7:6, 1 Corinthians 2:1-16].

¹³⁵ 5.6.1, p531.

The contrast, for the Christian, is not between the body and the soul, not between outward form and Idea, but rather between the creation delivered over to death by sin and new creation; between the corruptible, fleshly body and the incorruptible resurrection body.¹³⁶

Or to employ Irenaeus' favoured Pauline image, the engrafted wild-tree does not lose its substance of wood once it begins to bear fruit. Reclaiming 1Corinthians 15:50 from Gnostic eis-egesis, Irenaeus acknowledges that Adamic life without the Spirit cannot inherit the Kingdom, since only the Spirit achieves the required transformation sealed in Christ's resurrection; 'man, if he did not receive through faith the engrafting of the Spirit, remains in his old condition, and being [mere] flesh and blood, he cannot inherit the kingdom of God'.¹³⁷ This is not to repudiate the substance of flesh, as Gnostics claim, but simply to insist with Paul that σὰρξ must be infused by πνεῦμα. Only by the Spirit can the mortal assume immortality, corruption incorruption (1Corinthians 15:53). Only by the Spirit can the seed of the old world flower into the plant of the new, even as the seed of Christ's crucified body flowers into resurrection life. As for Christ, so for us, 'the final result of the work of the Spirit is the salvation of the flesh. For what other visible fruit is there of the invisible Spirit, than the rendering of the flesh mature and capable of incorruption?'¹³⁸

This future fellowship of flesh and Spirit is presently announced in the sacrament of bread and wine. The elements reveal the Son's body and blood, precisely because it is He who mediates both creation and redemption. For as Irenaeus makes abundantly clear, the offerings of this created earth cannot confess the work of a usurper, but only of their Creator. And in the Supper we are nourished by the *Lord's* own gifts,

He has acknowledged the cup (which is part of the creation) as His own blood, from which He bedews our blood; and the bread (also a part of the creation) He has established as His own body, from which He gives increase to our bodies.¹³⁹

The Gnostic supper is a sham, the elements offered to a god forever ignorant of material creation. Moreover the claim that flesh is destined to perdition simply denies our eating and drinking is by faith. The true Supper of the Lord, however, exemplifies the Gospel hope, as in the elements 'we offer to Him His own, announcing consistently the fellowship and union of the flesh and Spirit'.¹⁴⁰ For this is the project of creation, the commingling of earthly and heavenly, that our bodies may attain incorruption,

As the bread...produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly;

¹³⁶ Cullmann: *Immortality*, p31.

¹³⁷ 5.10.2, p536.

¹³⁸ 5.12.4, p538.

¹³⁹ 5.2.2, p528, 5.2.3 [Ephesians 5:30], 4.33.2.

¹⁴⁰ 4.18.5, p486.

so also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to eternity.¹⁴¹

The Eucharist therefore is the Divine affirmation of creation. As Wainwright perceives,

The use of bread and wine at the eucharist confirms the picture that emerges from the opening chapters of Genesis of a material creation that is destined to be the scene and vehicle of the communion God intends between Himself and the human creature.¹⁴²

The Supper is a supremely eschatological act, for it brings the commingling of the Spirit with this present material order. The elements as visible word proclaim not only the return of Christ but the transformation of creation by the Spirit, that the whole man might partake of salvation.

It is by uniting with the flesh that the Spirit accomplishes the τέλος of creation. The union is known in advance whenever the Church partakes of the Supper. For the meal is both an earthly and spiritual blessing, both the affirmation and the promised transformation of this present order, where the 'concreteness, the preciseness of home-baked bread and earthy red wine, in pottery plates and chalices, received with much chewing and swallowing, witnesses to the mystery of the Word made flesh'.¹⁴³ Lee therefore criticises the typical communion meal of the contemporary Church, as 'an unmistakeable Gnostic witness against the significance of ordinary meals: common bread, wine, the table fellowship of laughter and tears'.¹⁴⁴ For the Word made flesh secures a redemption that is not extrapolated from this world, but that is precisely the πλήρωσις of creation. The Man of heaven is the first-fruits of the earth, the spiritual Man so dimly sketched by Adam prior to His coming. His resurrection secures a transformed glory, as He unites all things to Himself. In Him creation and redemption share a common tongue, without in any way denying the cosmic Fall, as the Creator Lord comes to His own, restoring a broken world in anticipation of final resurrection. This dynamic relation between creation and redemption, first order and last, is of utmost relevance to our anti-teleological age of hardened secularism and ecological crisis. For 'the primary object of Christian thought...is neither the creation alone nor the realm of redemption alone, but the Lord in whom the relation between creation and redemption is clarified.'¹⁴⁵ It is in Him that redemption will be seen to be creation's τέλος, not the *denial* of flesh, but its glorious investiture and transformation by the Spirit of God.

¹⁴¹ 4.18.5, p486, 4.17.5, 4.18.4.

¹⁴² G.Wainwright: *Eucharist and Eschatology*, London: Epworth, 1978, p149.

¹⁴³ Lee: *Gnostics*, p273.

¹⁴⁴ As above.

¹⁴⁵ J.G.Gibbs: *Creation and Redemption: A Study in Pauline Theology*, Leiden: Brill, 1971, p158.

CHAPTER 6: 'A RESURRECTION TO COME'

As our Master...did not at once depart, taking flight [to heaven], but awaited the time of His resurrection prescribed by the Father...so ought we also to await the time of our resurrection prescribed by God.

(5.31.2)

We have examined in chapter five how creation and redemption share a common tongue in the Man of heaven, who exemplifying in advance the cosmic project by His own resurrection from death, will restore His broken world on the future Day of resurrection. It is in Him the cosmic story is told. Yet the Spirit who secured His bodily resurrection has delayed the transformation of this present order. Human history continues since that new dawn. The old order persists, in expectation of the Son's work of recreation. Life for Adam's children continues to be lived within this delay before the τέλος, as the resurrection of Christ and cosmos are partitioned in time. Yet this cosmic suspension of events is not without purpose. Hope of the coming Day gladdens not only the people of God, but also a weary creation. For the coming resurrection achieves both the redemption of the Church and the universal transformation of all things. Creation's future is interpreted by means of Christology. The Man raised from death holds the keys to Death and Hades (Revelation 1:18). One question arising therefore is the precise *purpose* of this cosmic delay. Moreover if the resurrection of the Christ secures the resurrection of all creation, one should ask whether *all* humanity is incorporated into His salvific work. This chapter will therefore appraise the Irenaean conception of the Eschaton, when on the final Day the righteous Judge of all earth will be seen to exercise both salvation *and* judgement.

Experience in the Spirit

If we are to explain why the cosmic delay to final resurrection is purposed for the Church on earth, it is because it is through this Spirit-filled community that Christ appeals to the world before the coming Day. Evoking a classic Irenaean theme, the Spirit in the Church indwells the place of former death to produce the fruits of new life. For the Spirit pervades the life of all Christ's disciples, indwelling the flesh formerly enslaved. Regeneration permeates the place of former death, as the Spirit makes the life of Jesus manifest in mortal flesh, bringing the renewal of 'the selfsame man who was...in times past...in ignorance of God'.¹ The future resurrection simply extends this present miracle to the body, 'if, therefore, in the present time, fleshly hearts are made partakers of the Spirit, what is there astonishing if, in the resurrection, they receive

¹ 5.12.4, p538 [Colossians 3:10].

that life...granted by the Spirit?'² The theme echoes Paul's Romans 6 teaching, where redemption must permeate and transform the very members of this first creation by new works of righteousness, '*in these same members...in which we used to serve sin, and bring forth fruit unto death, does He wish us to be obedient unto righteousness, that we may bring forth fruit unto life*'.³ Jewett on the same passage maintains,

It is the body rather than the pneumatic self which is the arena of the salvation drama. For it is here that the deadly rule of sin makes itself apparent, the death of the old man in baptism takes place, and the new life in the spirit is enacted.⁴

The locus of death is a Spirit-less flesh transformed by the Spirit into the dwelling of life. For the Spirit is the great power of resurrection, renewing the inner man, enabling Cullmann to say, 'wherever the Holy Spirit is at work we have what amounts to a momentary retreat of the power of death, a certain foretaste of the End'.⁵ This Spirit-empowered transformation is constituent to the promise of Divine inheritance, as the bishop makes clear,

As, therefore, he who...has brought forth the fruit of the Spirit, is saved altogether because of the communion of the Spirit; so also he who has continued in the aforesaid works of the flesh, being truly reckoned as carnal, because he did not receive the Spirit of God, shall not have power to inherit the kingdom of heaven.⁶

This is the 'carnal' life Paul describes in 1Corinthians 15:50, not the denial of corporeality but the absence of the Spirit in the flesh of this present order. To proclaim the Church as people of the Spirit is not then to *deny* the flesh, but simply to maintain that *flesh alone is insufficient* to inherit the Kingdom. The miracle of rebirth 'does not take place by a casting away of the flesh, but by the impartation of the Spirit'.⁷ In Pauline terms our *body* is now the Spirit's temple, since we have become members of the Spirit-filled Christ. Thus to condemn the flesh to perdition is to deny the Spirit His destined home, 'how then is it not the utmost blasphemy to allege, that the temple of God, in which the Spirit of the Father dwells, and the members of Christ, do not partake of salvation, but are reduced to perdition?'⁸ The πνευματικοί are not disembodied, but are freed from the slavery of fallen Adamic life. They are persons 'not enslaved by the lusts of the flesh, but...subject to the Spirit',⁹ carefully tended to yield His fruit.

The 'spiritual' life therefore is corporeal life by the Spirit, the call to mortify the old Adamic nature, not kill the body. With a humorous touch, Irenaeus insists the command to cast off the old 'does not remove away the ancient formation [of man]; for in that case it would be

² 5.13.4, p540 [2 Corinthians 3:3, 4:10-11].

³ Italics mine, 5.14.4, p542 [Romans 6:12-23].

⁴ R.Jewett: *Paul's Anthropological Terms*, Leiden: Brill, 1971, p301.

⁵ Cullmann: *Immortality*, p35. Thus Behr articulates 'asceticism' as the strength of the Spirit to overcome the weakness of flesh (Behr: *Asceticism*, p211).

⁶ 5.11.1, p537 [Galatians 5:16-26].

⁷ 5.8.1, p533.

⁸ 5.6.2, p532 [John 2:19-21, 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:15].

⁹ 5.8.2, p534, 5.8.3, 5.10.1, whereas the carnal are like irrational animals [Jeremiah 5:8, Psalm 49:20].

incumbent on us to rid ourselves of its company by committing suicide'.¹⁰ Rather, life by the Spirit must overcome the old *fallen* nature, for the Spirit's work is not to despise but revive all that pertains to true Adamic life. As O'Donovan has rightly argued, it is only the Spirit-filled life of resurrection that can define the project of Christian ethics. Here Irenaeus expounds Paul's Galatian teaching, where both adherence to Torah and liberty to sin characterize a life of the flesh over against the Spirit; 'whether it appears as law or as licence, the ultimate fact about life according to flesh is that it is a refusal of life in the Spirit'.¹¹ Christian living however sees the old existence in Adam as crucified with Christ, that we might rise to live in newness of the Spirit. Particularly in the Corinthian correspondence, Paul expounds the comprehensiveness of this spiritual life over against a seemingly Gnostic dichotomy, whereby the 'dispensable' outer body may freely engage in sexual promiscuity without seemingly compromising spirituality (1Corinthians 5:1-13, 6:12-20). The so-called 'spiritual' Corinthian perspective is actually exposed as *κατὰ σάρκα* (1Corinthians 3:1-3, 2Corinthians 5:16). Irenaeus' Gnostic refutation follows Pauline footsteps.

The delay before the *τέλος* therefore marks the Spirit's power upon the Church. As for Christ so for His body - in the barren womb, the grave and in fallen people - the Spirit transforms the place of death into life. The delay means fruitfulness for a Church extending the favour of Christ. For now is the Year of the Lord's favour, 'the whole time of faith during which men hear and believe the preaching of the Gospel...the whole time during which believers in Christ suffer and are put to death for His sake'.¹² This testimony of Christ, extended by a *suffering* Church, includes miraculous signs for the blessing of the nations, 'those who are in truth His disciples, receiving grace from Him, do in His Name perform [miracles], so as to promote the welfare of other men'.¹³ The testimony, we may remember, even extends to raising the dead.¹⁴ Such wonders adorn the Church's universal witness. For Christ's people extend His grace to a dying world by sharing Christ's death before resurrection, soberly exemplified by Irenaeus' own martyrdom. Even here the Spirit generates life from the place of death, as the Church brings her Lord offerings in gratitude and service.¹⁵

The delayed resurrection also grants the community of faith space to cultivate mature relationship, as 'the Church becomes the locus of the human freedom that is the gift of the Lord who is the Spirit'.¹⁶ In Irenaean terms it is here that Christ shapes fallen men into His Image, as

¹⁰ 5.12.3, p538 [Colossians 3:9-10].

¹¹ O'Donovan: *Resurrection*, p13, 22.5 [Galatians 5:16-26, Romans 8:9-11].

¹² 2.22.2, p390 [Isaiah 61:2, Romans 8:36].

¹³ 2.32.4, p409, 2.32.5.

¹⁴ 2.31.2, see chapter 4, p107, footnote 67.

¹⁵ 4.30.3 [Luke 16:9], 4.30.1-2.

¹⁶ Gunton: *Christ and Creation*, p108 [Acts 2:42-7, Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 2 Corinthians 3:17-5:21], Farrow: *Ascension*, p68-9.

the Church learns to grow into her Head, 'an incorporation into the natural sonship which is Christ's as the only *begotten* Son of God'.¹⁷ Gunton's ecclesiological outlook echoes the theme,

The calling of the community of reconciliation is to be those who learn to live in the creation as creation, as gift: in the space won for the life of the world by the victory of Jesus. Thus and only thus will it be able to open up space in which others may find freedom.¹⁸

This necessary progression in the community of faith guards the bishop against seeds of institutionalism, whereby the earthly church - in Gnostic-like imitation of its eternal heavenly counterpart - becomes the internal regulative principle of the cosmos. Admitting the mediation between Christ and Church, Irenaeus' *eschatological* trajectory necessarily nuances Augustine's *totus Christus* ecclesiology, whereby the earthly Church all too easily usurps the heavenly mediation of Jesus. Consequently Augustine can claim 'that the Church even now is the Kingdom of Christ and the Kingdom of heaven'.¹⁹ Such a Ptolemaic outlook leaves the Church essentially *static*. As argued by Doyle, and as broadly testified in the history of Roman Catholicism, where 'Christian activity was in mimetic relationship to the heavenly kingdom of God...the church was in essence unreformable'.²⁰ It is Irenaeus' fundamentally dynamic ecclesiology that guards Christ's Body against such perilous Gnostic-like imitation.

Furthermore, within the 'space' that is the time before the τέλος, the earthly church lives out the resurrection hope assured in Christ's return. Even in the Promised Land Abraham awaited this hope, 'walking as a pilgrim with the Word, that he might [afterwards] have his abode with the Word'.²¹ The devoted workman labours in similar expectation, upholding the true faith with sound mind and good works, in obedient readiness of Christ's return in judgement.²² The Church lives in a world whose form is passing away, substantiating Cullmann's claim that 'the only dialectic...found in the New Testament...is not the dialectic between this world and the Beyond; moreover, it is not that between time and eternity; it is rather *the dialectic of present and future*'.²³ This may explain why Corinth's Gnostic-like derogation of corporeality, which spawns the poisoned fruit of both libertinism and asceticism (1Corinthians 6-7), appears grounded in the implicit denial of future bodily resurrection.²⁴ It is the failure to distinguish past 'inward' rebirth (Ephesians 2:4-6) from somatic resurrection to come (Romans 8:10-11,

¹⁷ Minns: *Irenaeus*, p112, also Wingren: *Incarnation*, p147-8, 169-70 [Ephesians 4:11-16].

¹⁸ Gunton: *Atonement*, p168.

¹⁹ Augustine: *City*, 20.9, p915, Farrow: *Ascension*, p121-8. Origen is also prone to the danger (*Ascension*, p103-5).

²⁰ Doyle: *Eschatology and the Shape of Christian Belief*, Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999, p155. Doyle also perceives the mimetic principle in the Roman reoffering of Christ in the Mass [p155-6].

²¹ 4.5.3, p467 [Hebrews 11:8-10].

²² 4.36.3 [Luke 12:35-6, 17:26-37, 21:34-5, Matthew 24:36-44], *Demonstration* §98, Gunton: *Triune Creator*, p226. Calvin too sees the Church's comfort in this future hope, 'he alone has fully profited in the gospel who has accustomed himself to continual meditation upon the blessed resurrection,' (*Institutes*: 3.25.1, p988 also 3.9.6).

²³ Cullmann: *Christ and Time*, p146, 211-3 [1 Corinthians 7:31].

²⁴ P.Lampe 'Paul's Concept of a Spiritual Body' in *Resurrection*, ed Peters/Russell/Welker, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002, p104-5 [1 Corinthians 4:8, 15:12].

John 5:24-5, Philippians 3:10-11).²⁵ In this light, one can readily see how the promise of being raised in the body informs godly conduct, since quoting Westcott, 'each sin against the body is no longer a stain on that which is itself doomed to perish, but a defilement of that which is consecrated to an eternal life'.²⁶

For Irenaeus then the Church is comprised not of those aspiring to freedom from flesh, but of those whose flesh is increasingly indwelt by the Spirit. As for the Head so for the Body, the place of death must receive the Spirit's life, as the suffering Church holds out the favour of Christ, living as the community of faith in resurrection hope of her returning Lord. The Church is thus an *eschatological* community, knowing even now the indwelling Spirit, in the promised assurance of future resurrection. Yet to echo the Thessalonian concern, what should we say of those no longer on earth, who have died in the faith?

Paradisal Fellowship

The Delay before final resurrection holds purpose not only for the earthly Church, but also for its heavenly counterpart. In what has become a contentious question, Irenaeus argues for continuity of existence post-death, pre-παρουσία, in what may be called the 'intermediate state'. Such an existence acknowledges the calamitous dislocation wrought by death, against an evolutionary cosmological universalism that knows no curse. In fulfilment of the Divine word, the body of the man of dust does return to the ground (Genesis 3:19), leaving the soul in discarnate life. Yet the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob forbids death's curtailment of promised covenant fellowship. The soul exists after death, in what one might call the typical Early Church view.²⁷ The breath of life that forms the incorporeal soul leaves at death, as the body 'after the soul's departure, becomes breathless and inanimate, and is decomposed gradually into the earth from which it was taken'.²⁸ As the body decays, righteous souls are transferred to 'paradise', the Lord's planted garden (LXX Genesis 2:8: παράδεισος). This seems the place to which Paul is temporarily translated, 'for paradise has been prepared for righteous men, such as have the Spirit'.²⁹ The bishop therefore argues for an integrative dualism where 'person' and 'body', though not metaphysically identical, operate as a singular holistic unit. The likes of Cooper, Taliaferro and Davis share much in common with this view,³⁰ over against

²⁵ Harris: *Resurrection*, p98, 105-6.

²⁶ Westcott: *Resurrection*, p182.

²⁷ Tertullian, Hippolytus, Chrysostom, Hilary and Ambrose also acknowledge an intermediate state distinguished from the final Day (Kelly: *Doctrines*, p468, 482-3).

²⁸ 5.7.1, p533.

²⁹ 5.5.1, p531 [2Corinthians 12:2-4].

³⁰ This is precisely the theme of Cooper's *Body, Soul and Life Everlasting*. See also S.T.Davis: *Risen Indeed: Making Sense of the Resurrection*, London: SPCK, 1993, p85-109 and C.Taliaferro: *Consciousness and the Mind of God*, Cambridge: University Press, 1994, p114-28.

what we might call an *ontological* monism presupposed by the typical contemporary trend that designates body soul and spirit as different *expressions* of the whole man.³¹ Yet though the present tends to view all forms of dualism with suspicion, to a point where the Irenaean body/soul distinction is branded a Platonic truncation of the corporeality of the gospel, ontological monism does raise its own set of problems. It must claim after all either non-existence between death and παρουσία or *immediate* resurrection, by artificially setting heaven's eternity against earth's temporality, as if resurrection has *already* transpired in heaven before earth. Crude dualism is of course an ironic charge to make against a man devoted to the refutation of Gnostic doctrine! But the question remains, how defensible is Irenaeus' doctrine of the soul?

The bishop presumes no two-tier distinction of time and eternity between earth and heaven (argued by some as *itself* a mark of Platonism).³² Rather Jesus' mention to the Sadducees of Exodus 3 appears to teach a *present* fellowship between the patriarchs and their Lord, 'for if He be not the God of the dead, but of the living, yet was called the God of the fathers who were sleeping, they do indubitably live to God, and have not passed out of existence'.³³ Continual existence post-death is certainly not without Scriptural warrant. The שֹׁפָר departing the body appears to act as continuing locus of personal identity post-death (Genesis 35:18). And certainly the language of Sheol seems to extend personal existence beyond earthly bodily life. At one level Sheol is a place of lethargy and inactivity, where God is denied praise (Ecclesiastes 9:10, Isaiah 38:18, Psalm 88:10-12). Yet the dead *remain*, though in ghostly form, still conscious and active, described as נְפִשִׁים (Job 26:5-6, Proverbs 2:18, 9:18, 21:16, Isaiah 14:9, 26:14,19). Scripture too extends the promise of *redemption* from this ethereal existence (Isaiah 14:9-10, Psalm 16:10, 30:3, 49:15, 86:13, 139:8), supporting Cooper's view that 'the absolute continuity of personal identity beyond death is essential to the Old Testament picture'.³⁴ Irenaeus amplifies this vision by reading in the account of Lazarus and the rich man a description of the afterlife pre-resurrection, with a distinction made between ᾗδης and γέννα. Hades after all appears an interim location, since the rich man's brothers continue to live on earth. Final resurrection is still to come,

It is plainly declared that souls continue to exist, that they do not pass from body to body, that they possess the form of a man, so that they may be recognised, and retain the memory of things in this world...and that each class [of souls] receives the habitation such as it has deserved, even before the judgement.³⁵

³¹ Cooper: *Body*, p16-20, 33-6.

³² Cullmann: *Christ and Time*, p51-67.

³³ 4.5.2, p467 [Luke 20:34-8].

³⁴ Cooper: *Body*, p68, 53-70.

³⁵ 2.34.1, p411.

All such texts militate against the claims of extinction-recreation, as does the curious appearance of Moses and Elijah at Christ's transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-5, Mark 9:2-4). Moreover the crucified thief is assured immediate entry into paradise, even before the consummation of Messiah's rule (Luke 23:42-3). Paul's ecstatic out-of-body experience brings his self into the dwelling-place of the faithful, even before final resurrection.³⁶ The Irenaean view advocating the continued post-death existence of souls enjoys strong biblical testimony.³⁷

Most importantly, the soul's survival post-death finds in Irenaeus a *Christological* foundation, rooted in the conviction that the ἀρχή and τέλος of the faith must define *every* aspect of soteriology. Once again we are reminded of the Christocentricity of Irenaeus' project. At death Jesus' πνεῦμα leaves His σῶμα (Matthew 27:50, John 19:30), preserving a necessary continuity between Calvary and the third day that is implicitly denied by the claims of extinction-recreation or immediate resurrection. Somewhat overzealously Irenaeus also reads Ephesians 4:9 with reference to the intermediate state, though in context Paul appears to speak of Christ's incarnation, a descent from heaven to earth before subsequent ascension.³⁸ What is not in doubt however is 'that for three days He dwelt in the place where the dead were',³⁹ with diverse texts anticipating His resurrection from Sheol (Psalm 16:10, 30:3, 49:15, 86:13). Central to the bishop's thinking is the conviction that Christology must define all aspects of redemption, as the Saviour in His own incarnate life exemplifies His people's journey, the 'delayed' resurrection of the Head effecting the delayed resurrection of the body. A Gnostic-like immediate resurrection would simply set servants above their Master. But Christ of course is the ἀρχηγός of the faith,

For as the Lord 'went away in the midst of the shadow of death,' [Psalm 23:4] where the souls of the dead were, yet afterwards arose in the body, and after the resurrection was taken up [into heaven], it is manifest that the souls of His disciples also, upon whose account the Lord underwent these things, shall go away into the invisible place allotted to them by God, and there remain until the resurrection, awaiting that event; then receiving their bodies, and rising in their entirety, that is bodily, just as the Lord arose, they shall come thus into the Presence of God.⁴⁰

He who pervades the entire cosmos experiences as the incarnate Word every part of His creation, even non-corporeal life post-death, drawing His disciples into His own journey, that He might truly be the Lord of all.

Ontological monism however, with its common assumption that the body is transformed *immediately* after individual death, cannot uphold this Christological pattern. Harris for one faces the problem, when he reinterprets 2Corinthians 5:1-10 as a Pauline volte-face. The

³⁶ 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 where 'παράδεισος' seems synonymous with 'τρίτος οὐρανός'. Modern interpretations of the event as mere trance-like experience are unconvincing (Cooper: *Body*, p120-9).

³⁷ We could also mention Philippians 1:22-23, 2 Corinthians 5:1-10, Hebrews 12:22-24, Revelation 6:9-11.

³⁸ 4.22.1, 5.31.1.

³⁹ 5.31.1, p560. Here, as in 3.20.4 and 4.22.1, Irenaeus cites an unknown text.

⁴⁰ 5.31.2, p560.

passage becomes the so-called turning-point of the apostle's eschatology, where transformation precedes the παρουσία. Thus ἔχομεν (v1b), no longer a futuristic present, allegedly conveys 'no interval of homelessness' between the destroyed earthly body and the gift of the σῶμα πνευματικόν. Moreover the prefix ἐπ-ενδύομαι (v2,4) implies that the heavenly resurrection robe is donned over this present earthly garment, without divestiture. The 'departure' of v8a brings not temporary homelessness, but 'the immediate assumption of a new form of residence (the spiritual body) in a new location ('in the Presence of the Lord')'.⁴¹ Harris concludes that Paul dons the heavenly body at death without first having doffed the earthly. Resurrection is subsequently conceived as a *continuing individual* process, 'commencing with the individual believer's baptismal identification with Christ's death and resurrection...and climaxed in his assumption of the image of Christ...at the moment of death'.⁴² Robert Charles would similarly argue the case for immediate resurrection.⁴³ However the view raises numerous problems. For if investiture happens instantaneously at death, then fellowship between incorporeal souls and their Lord is denied a priori, and resurrection would occur *before* the final trumpet, importing not so much development as significant incongruities into Paul's writings.⁴⁴ It is best instead to understand 2Corinthians 5:1-10 as simply craving the eschatological body over and beyond the intermediate state, where the apostle according to Moule sees death before παρουσία as the painful process of divestiture, the groaning of creation.⁴⁵ Moreover super-investiture would not allow for transformation, since the old order would merely be covered and hidden from sight. Γυμνός (v3) then appears to describe the imperfection of *disembodied existence*, when compared to the spiritual body to come. There are also systematic failings in the monist view. Van Inwagen for one admits that God must preserve something of my 'present' being, my γυμνός κόκκος (1Corinthians 15:37), particularly if our material constitution is always composed of different atoms at different times.⁴⁶ Whilst Hardman sees little final distinction between immediate resurrection and the intermediate state, since the former is 'only a cumbersome way of declaring that the soul is capable of functioning after death'.⁴⁷ Even if the spiritual body is immediately donned by the soul, immediate resurrection is in this regard not manifestly different from what it seeks to refute. More fundamentally, the argument for immediate resurrection introduces the inevitable (Hellenic?) distinction between time and eternity in the relation between earth and heaven, robbing the παρουσία of both its earthly significance and its temporal meaning. And with peculiar relevance to our own question, the view (along with immortality of the Greek soul) appears to dis sever נַפְשׁ from מַדְבָּרָא,

⁴¹ Harris: *Resurrection*, p99-100.

⁴² M.J.Harris: '2Corinthians 5:1-10: Watershed in Paul's Eschatology?' in *TB*, vol 22, 1971, p32-57 [p55].

⁴³ R.H.Charles: *The Resurrection of Man*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1929, p44-5, 52-3.

⁴⁴ See Philippians 1:20-4, 2 Corinthians 12:1-4, 1 Corinthians 15:50-5, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

⁴⁵ C.F.D.Moule: 'St. Paul and Dualism: The Pauline Conception of Resurrection', *NTS*, vol 12, p106-23.

⁴⁶ P.van Inwagen: 'Dualism and Materialism: Athens and Jerusalem?' in *FP* 12/4, 1995, p475-88 [p485-6].

⁴⁷ Hardman: *Resurrection*, p27.

transgressing the biblical foundation of Genesis 2:7. In the discerning words of Cullmann, 'both conceptions tear the individual resurrection out of the redemptive process'.⁴⁸

In truth, the telic delay is real for both the Church of earth *and* heaven. The distinction between them comes not in temporal dislocation, but in the fact that dead believers share a discarnate paradisaal experience of *enriched* fellowship with Christ. Death brings a 'departure' from earthly bodily life, conveyed by such apostolically chosen words as ἀνάλυσις (2Timothy 4:6) and ἔξοδος (2Peter 1:15), to a 'far better' communion with the Lord in heaven (Luke 23:43, 2Corinthians 5:6-8, Philippians 1:23-4). Scripture's language of 'sleep' in no way denies this paradisaal pre-resurrection fellowship. Κοιμάομαι as a euphemism for death need not imply unconsciousness or inexistence, but rather *faith in the coming resurrection*. Those who 'lie down' (κοιμάομαι) will 'rise' (ἀνίστημι). Indeed the apostle purposely employs both senses of the word in John 11:11-14, as the disciples, confusing 'sleep' with 'death', misunderstand Jesus' intended raising of Lazarus.⁴⁹ Upholding the Irenaeian testimony to paradisaal fellowship best preserves a continuity of personhood, bringing in turn a necessary continuity in creation. The perspective chimes with Paul's use of personal pronouns (2Corinthians 5:1-10, 12:2-7, Philippians 1:21-3), whereby the ἐγώ continues in unbroken fellowship with Christ from death to second coming. Unlike Harris' implicit denial of transformation, or the 'new being' proposed by extinction-recreation, paradisaal fellowship ensures the discarnate person remains continuous with God's original handiwork. Against the Gnostics and in challenge to our day, Irenaeus grants personal identity a continuous history.

However this paradisaal fellowship pre-παρουσία is, in Cooper's words, 'always an anthropologically deficient mode of existence because souls need bodies'.⁵⁰ It is to be γυμνός, in expectation of final clothing. Life outside the body is ontologically incomplete, as the discarnate ψυχή that is the fleshless person awaits Divine vindication.⁵¹ The dead in Christ live in eschatological expectation, in an ongoing tension between present and future. In the words of James Orr,

The disembodied state is never presented in Scripture...as other than one of incomplete being – of enfeebled life, diminished powers, restricted capacities of action. 'Sheol,' 'Hades,' is not the abode of true immortality. It follows that salvation from a state of sin which has brought man under the law of death must include deliverance from this incomplete condition. It must include deliverance from Sheol – 'the redemption of the body.' The Redeemer must be One who holds 'the keys of death and of Hades.' It must embrace resurrection.⁵²

⁴⁸ Cullmann: *Christ and Time*, p231.

⁴⁹ Matthew 27:52, Acts 7:60, 13:36, 1 Corinthians 7:39, 15:6,20,51, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-15, 2 Peter 3:4, John 11:11-14 (L.Coenen 'Καθευδω' in NIDNT vol 1, p441-3).

⁵⁰ Cooper: *Body*, p93.

⁵¹ Cooper, p115-8.

⁵² J.Orr: *The Resurrection of Jesus*, London: Hodder&Stoughton, 1909, p283.

The intermediate state, far from static Platonism, is a self-consciously unfulfilled existence, looking *ever forwards* to final resurrection. Corporeal existence is integral to human life, as witnessed in Christ's own resurrection from the death. The saints continue to holler under the altar 'how long?' until the Divine purposes are complete (Revelation 6:9-11). Calvin expresses the truth memorably,

For although the souls of the dead are now living, and enjoy quiet repose, yet the whole of their felicity and consolation depends exclusively on the resurrection; because it is well with them on this account, and no other, that they wait for that day, on which they shall be called to the possession of the kingdom of God.⁵³

The fullness of salvation, a bodily conformity to the resurrected Christ, is still to come. The common monist charge, that paradisaal fellowship somehow denies the need for resurrection, is vacuous. Trenton Merricks expresses such a view, 'obviously one cannot maintain both that life after death occurs *before* resurrection and also that life after death *requires* resurrection'.⁵⁴ But if 'life' denotes fellowship with Christ, we may rightly call the dead in Christ 'alive', without intending their eschatological fullness. In fact, against Merricks' monism, one might say that disembodied fellowship makes perfect sense in the light of cosmic fall and final redemption. The Divine warning of Adam's death does come to pass, as the soul is dismembered from a body returning to dust (Genesis 2:17, 3:19). The intermediate state confirms this tragedy. Yet the promise of corporeal redemption, secured in Christ's own resurrection from the dead, incites the saints to cry 'how long', in expectation of another Day. Paradisaal fellowship does not undermine the corporeality of personhood. It is only ever an 'im-mature' state of *partial* redemption, an interim existence confessing both past fall and future bodily resurrection. It is an experience, one might say, *along the way* to the End.

The delay before the τέλος is therefore real to all believers, in earth and heaven. Though the body returns to the earth at death, Irenaeus' holistic dualism posits a continuity of life post-death, in paradisaal fellowship with Christ. Yet this blessed state is not the *final* hope, even as Christ's work does not end with His soul in paradise. The sure goal of Christ-likeness brings present dissatisfaction, and an irreversible movement towards ἐνδύμησης, an expectant future-oriented desire to be fully clothed on our own 'third day', however long the delay may be.

⁵³ J. Calvin: *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, vol 2, trans J. Pringle, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948, p21 [commenting on 1 Corinthians 15:18].

⁵⁴ T. Merricks: 'The Resurrection of the body and the Life everlasting' [p261-86], in *Reason for the Hope Within*, ed M. Murray, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999, p281.

The Groaning of Creation

Not only the Church experiences the delay before final resurrection, but also the entire creation. For it is first and last Adam, the man of dust and Man of heaven, who determine creation's story alongside that of humanity. Cullmann rightly states that 'the whole of present-day humanity *indeed all aspects of creation* stands between two poles, so to speak – between Adam and Jesus, the first and second Adam'.⁵⁵ Creation's groaning and hope, subjection and freedom express her life under human dominion, whether exercised by Adam or Christ. Having seen how ἀνακεφαλαιώσις is tethered to this anthropological mooring, one could hardly accuse Irenaeus of neglecting Scripture's Adam-Christ vista. Somewhat ironically however, the bishop's eschatology, governed at this point by pre-millenarian concerns, risks wedding creation's future to speculative temporal questions. Cosmic redemption is dictated and constrained by Christ's thousand-year reign, leaving the more parochial question of *when* to cloud Scripture's broadest theme; cosmic dislocation through the first Adam and renewal through the Last.

The tendency surfaces for example in Irenaeus' detailed description of the future tribulation. The spirit of antichrist intrudes on all church history, as witnessed by the apostle.⁵⁶ But the recurring pattern of rebellion gathers into one, who 'concentrating in himself [all] satanic apostasy...will endeavour in a tyrannical manner to set himself forth as God'.⁵⁷ Evil is recapitulated before final destruction,

There is therefore in this beast, when he comes, a recapitulation made of all sorts of iniquity and of every deceit, in order that all apostate power, flowing into and being shut up in him, may be sent into the furnace of fire.⁵⁸

Questions of timing begin to intrude upon the cosmic theme. Though noting the hazards of conjecture, Irenaeus cannot resist proposing plausible antichrist candidates of his own, speculating on the tribe of Dan, absent from Revelation's heavenly vision.⁵⁹ However understood, the period of tribulation certainly *intensifies* the pattern of persecution, which has served to purify the Church throughout her history,

For this cause tribulation is necessary for those who are saved, that having been after a manner broken up, and rendered fine, and sprinkled over by the patience of the Word of God, and set on fire [for purification], they may be fitted for the royal banquet.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Italics mine, Cullmann: *Christology*, p173.

⁵⁶ 1 John 2:18,22, 4:3, 2 John 1:7.

⁵⁷ 5.25.1, p553, 5.25.2 [Matthew 24:15-21], 5.25.4 [Daniel 8:9-12,23-6], 5.25.5.

⁵⁸ 5.29.2, p558. A bizarre interpretation of the number of the beast (Rev 13:8) confirms the pre-millenarian tendency to speculation.

⁵⁹ 5.30.3, p559, including citing the arithmetical value of Greek letters, 5.30.2 [Jeremiah 8:16, Revelation 7:5-8].

⁶⁰ 5.28.4, p557, 5.25.3 [Daniel 7:23-25, 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12], 5.25.4. Irenaeus quotes one martyred believer, 'I am the wheat of Christ, and am ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of God' [5.28.4].

The persecution of Christ's people climaxes in this final tribulation, prophesied by Ananias, Azarias and Mishael's ordeal in the fiery furnace, 'the last contest of the righteous, in which, when they overcome, they are crowned with incorruption'.⁶¹ Yet here we note a tension, for the bleeding church of Gaul could reasonably assume the imminence of that final time. Eighteen subsequent centuries unveil the difficulties of anticipating the coming tribulation in one's own day. Certainly, with the tribulation's end comes the Kingdom of Christ, when the uncut Stone dashes rebellious kingdoms to pieces.⁶² The returning Lord casts His enemy and followers into the lake of fire, securing for creation the promised Sabbath-rest,

Bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom, that is, the rest, the hallowed seventh day; and restoring to Abraham the promised inheritance, in which kingdom the Lord declared, that 'many coming from the east and from the west should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob'.⁶³

Destruction of the antichrist inaugurates Christ's millennial reign, where Abraham and all who share his faith enter the joys of their promised inheritance.

Irenaeus therefore acknowledges the present groaning of creation. But upholding the Early Church preference for pre-millenarianism (including Papias, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Hippolytus and the Montanists), he tends to ascribe creation's release to the *millennial* kingdom rather than to the new heavens and earth. Certainly he is no precursor of Darby's divisive epochal dispensationalism,⁶⁴ since the bishop insists the great Tribulation mirrors a *recurring* pattern of persecution. Yet his comparatively sober outlook appears, albeit unwittingly, so to speculate upon temporal questions as to risk disjointing eschatology from its Adam-Christ backdrop. A groaning creation awaits the coming millennial reign, leaving the hope of cosmic freedom rather less rooted in the Adamic story. Despite the teacher's incessant lament of post-lapsarian life,⁶⁵ the bishop rarely mentions Eden's faithless man bringing creation's 'futile' yield (Genesis 3:16-17), as a good earth suffers the idolatry of her lord. The Divinely intended movement of creation from servitude to freedom is thoroughly expounded (διὰ τὸν ὑποτάξαντα ἐφ' ἐλπίδι: Romans 8:20-1), but the promise of cosmic redemption is often reduced to pre-millenarian debate. One notes the relative paucity of reference to Genesis 3:16-19 and Romans 8:19-23. It is the temporal kingdom that almost always constrains the eschatological vision.

Of course Irenaeus wholeheartedly acknowledges the material creation's need to taste redemption, as expounded amongst others by Ladd,

⁶¹ 5.29.1, p558, 5.29.2.

⁶² 5.26.1 [Daniel 2:44-5].

⁶³ 5.30.4, p560 [Matthew 8:11].

⁶⁴ Doyle: *Eschatology*, p246-7.

⁶⁵ Ματαιιότης derivatives appear 31x in Ecclesiastes.

The biblical idea of redemption always includes the earth. Hebrew thought saw an essential link between man and nature. The prophets do not think of the earth as merely the indifferent theatre on which man carries out his normal task but as the expression of divine glory... The earth is the divinely ordained scene of human existence. Furthermore, the earth has been involved in the evils which sin has incurred. There is an interrelation of nature with the moral life of man, therefore the earth must also share in God's final redemption. The human heart, human society, and all of nature must be purged of the effects of evil, that God's glory may be perfectly manifested in his creation.⁶⁶

This after all explains Irenaeus' description of Christ's miracles as anticipations of final healing. Hoekema conveys an essentially *Irenaeian* thought,

[These] miracles were only signs, they had their limitations. For one thing, not all the sick were restored to health, and the dead who were raised still had to die. The miracles were provisional in their function, indicating the presence of the kingdom, but not yet marking its final consummation.⁶⁷

But it is the bishop's pre-millenarianism which, though affirming the Adam-Christ vista, tends to circumscribe its eschatological meaning to a temporally defined Kingdom of the Son, leaving little essential account of the final renewal of all things. More positively however, Irenaeus refuses any eschatological division between man and cosmos, אָדָם and מְנוּחָה, even if the τέλος of Genesis 2:7 is not sufficiently expounded. It is here that he challenges the Platonizing elements of some contemporary eschatology.

The apostle Paul expounds this same connection in Romans 8, as the hope of creation's renewal *requires* the bodily resurrection of the sons of God. Both the cosmos and believers groan for this Day (ἀπεκδέχομαι is purposely repeated in v19, 23 and 25), since the first Adam brought the dissolution of the body in death. Ever since the garden, the destinies of man and creation have belonged together. It is thus inadequate for Moltmann to see creation 'redeemed through human liberty', or even for Wolters to say, 'the Adamic human race perverts the cosmos; the Christian human race renews it'.⁶⁸ Such words can soon become an ecclesiological imperative to promote creation's renewal pre-παρουσία, as if opposing all distortion wrought by sin can secure creation's future. Paul by contrast ties renewal to the revelation of the σῶμα πνευματικόν. The Church *cannot* secure cosmic redemption, though her battle against all forms of sin conveys faith in that future day. Cosmic renewal must await bodily resurrection, 'as the subjection of the cosmos was due to man's sin...so the release will be due to man's redemption from sin. In effect this means that the cosmos as well as man looks to the Last Adam for salvation'.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ G.E.Ladd: *The Presence of the Future*, London: SPCK, 1980, p59-60.

⁶⁷ Hoekema: *The Bible and the Future*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982, p47.

⁶⁸ Moltmann: *God in Creation*, p69, Wolters: *Creation Regained*, p60.

⁶⁹ Scroggs: *Last Adam*, p72.

The earth enslaved to Adam's faithless rule will find freedom from present futility. In this journey towards a renewed creation, Irenaeus pre-millenarianism sails rather close to speculative waters. But at its heart, his eschatology finds shape in the resurrected Man, whose own bodily transformation guarantees creation's renewal at the final resurrection of His adopted brothers. Redemption awaits the σῶμα πνευματικόν.

The Earthly Kingdom

The downfall of antichrist concludes the Tribulation and inaugurates Christ's millennial reign, as the Lord returns to earth to resurrect the righteous to life. Irenaeus pre-millenarianism (alternatively called 'chiliasm') advances this earthly thousand-year reign of Christ with His saints prior to final judgement and the consummation of history. The tradition is apparently traced via Papias to the apostle John, 'these things are borne witness to in writing by Papias, the hearer of John, and a companion of Polycarp'.⁷⁰ Though Early Church pre-millenarianism has prompted embarrassment amongst commentators, who in the words of Christopher Smith have 'sought to excuse it as a gratuitous anomaly or pardonable excess',⁷¹ Irenaeus' earthly Kingdom fits rather neatly in a recapitulative schema, as Christ's reign marks an interim period of progressive transformation towards the new creation. It denotes, as it were, not the last piece of the old creation but the first piece of the new.⁷² The regnum preludes the world to come, a Kingdom upon the renewed earth before final judgement, where Christ reigns as visible King and the resurrected faithful share in His rule (Revelation 20:4-6). As the bishop reads the creation account via 2Peter 3:8, inferring 'in as many days as this world was made, in so many thousand years shall it be concluded',⁷³ the regnum marks the *seventh* Day of creation, after six thousand years of world history are complete. Christ's Kingdom is man's final preparation towards Divine fellowship. Such a temporally defined eschatology however is not without its problems.

It is to this earthly Kingdom that the righteous are raised, in a resurrection preceding final judgment. In fact the Kingdom may be considered the Lord's promised inheritance to His suffering Church. As with the virgin's womb, the grave of Christ and the regeneration of the spiritually dead, the Kingdom further illustrates the favoured Irenaeus theme of God transforming the abode of death into life. It is the former place of persecution, which becomes for the resurrected saints the locus of richest blessing,

⁷⁰ 5.33.4, p563, also Loofs: *Theophilus*, p325-6. Cerinthus is also credited with the tradition [Daley: *Hope*, p18].

⁷¹ C.Smith: 'Chiliasm and Recapitulation in the Theology of Irenaeus', *VC* vol 48, 1994, p313-331 [p313].

⁷² Smith: 'Chiliasm', p319-20.

⁷³ 5.28.3, p557.

For it is just that *in that very creation* in which they toiled and were afflicted, being proved in every way by suffering, they should receive the reward of their suffering; and that *in the creation* in which they were slain because of their love to God, in that they should be revived again; and that *in the creation* in which they endured servitude, in that they should reign.⁷⁴

Refuge comes not by fleeing the earth, but by awaiting Christ's renewal of earth's corruption. Indeed the millennial kingdom is the inheritance of land promised to Abraham. For Abraham remained a sojourner in Canaan, awaiting 'patiently the promise of God, and was unwilling to appear to receive from men, what God had promised to give him'.⁷⁵ Christ's earthly Kingdom constitutes the patriarchal hope, the blessing of Isaac upon Jacob, the promise of land to the true Israel, the hope of resurrection from dust into the Kingdom of the saints.⁷⁶ This too is Christ's Last Supper promise, to drink of the vine anew in the Kingdom, guaranteeing in turn 'the inheritance of the earth in which the new fruit of the vine is drunk, and the resurrection of His disciples in the flesh'.⁷⁷ Those raised in this first resurrection will enjoy 'the feasting of that creation in the kingdom of the righteous, which God promises...He will Himself serve'.⁷⁸ The earthly Kingdom, one might say, sees the 'tables turned' in vindication of Christ's people; 'it is fitting, therefore, that the creation itself, being restored to its primeval condition, should without restraint be under the dominion of the righteous'.⁷⁹

The Kingdom therefore serves as prologue to the new heavens and earth, inaugurating in advance a fruitful and harmonious creation that surpasses the abundance of Eden. Only then, finally under righteous rule, will creation be 'delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God',⁸⁰ as the earth throws off the cursed shackles of Adam's faithless dominion, to enjoy the government of the heavenly Man. It is then that an exuberant world 'renovated and set free, shall fructify with an abundance of all kinds of food, from the dew of heaven, and from the fertility of the earth'.⁸¹ It is with the rule of Christ and His Church that all flesh will enjoy the glories of a world without the curse of Death; 'it is right that when the creation is restored, all the animals should obey and be in subjection to man, and revert to the food originally given by God...that is, the productions of the earth'.⁸² True to the Irenaean vision of maturing progression, the earthly Kingdom serves also to advance the communion between God and men, as the saints are further transformed into the Image of Christ. In these

⁷⁴ Italics mine, 5.32.1, p561.

⁷⁵ 5.32.2, p561 [Genesis 13:13-17, 23:1-20, Acts 7:5, Hebrews 11:13].

⁷⁶ 5.33.3, 5.34.1 [Isaiah 26:19, Ezekiel 37:12ff, 28:25-6, Jeremiah 23:6-8].

⁷⁷ 5.33.1, p562.

⁷⁸ 5.34.3 [Jeremiah 31:10-14], p564, 5.33.2 [Galatians 3:6-16, Matthew 5:5, 19:29, Luke 14:12-14, 18:29].

⁷⁹ 5.32.1, p561.

⁸⁰ 5.32.1, p561 [Romans 8:19-21].

⁸¹ 5.33.3, p562. There follows an extraordinary account of the reported words of John, 'the days will come in which vines shall grow, each having ten thousand twigs, and in each twig ten thousand shoots, and in each one of the shoots ten thousand clusters, and on every one of the clusters ten thousand grapes, and every grape when pressed will give five and twenty metres of wine. And when any of the saints shall lay hold of a cluster, another shall cry out, "I am a better cluster, take me; bless the Lord though me"', p563. Also 5.34.2, p564 [Isaiah 30:25-6].

⁸² 5.33.4, p563, though *Demonstration* §61 understands the theme rather differently.

future days of resurrection, man acculturates to incorruptible fellowship with the Word made flesh, as the Son continually draws the Church towards His Father, 'the righteous shall reign in the earth, waxing stronger by the sight of the Lord: and through Him they shall become accustomed to partake in the glory of God the Father'.⁸³ The earthly Kingdom is thus no static bliss, but is a time and place of *ongoing* growth and learning for the people of God. It is this human advancement towards incorruption which authenticates the regnum as the foundation for the New City.⁸⁴ For the Kingdom that includes an earthly Jerusalem is built according to the pattern of the City to come, 'in the times of the kingdom, the earth has been called again by Christ [to its pristine condition], and Jerusalem rebuilt after the pattern of the Jerusalem above'.⁸⁵ Here then is a *preparatory* world, looking beyond itself, progressing safely towards *παλιγγενεσία*, the renewal and consummation of all things.

There are undoubted strengths to this doctrine, as the regnum preserves the necessary continuity between old and new creation that is central to Irenaeus recapitulation. Advancement for those in Christ continues, in an eschatological vision that is universal but not universalist. Reworking the favoured theme of life springing from death, the saints enjoy their inheritance in the place of former suffering and persecution. New life from old - witnessed in the virgin conception, resurrection from death and regeneration of believers - extends to all earthly creation, disclosing the all-embracing ministry of the Man of heaven. The millennial Kingdom becomes Paul's hope of a fully renewed creation (Romans 8:18-25), an unreserved fruitfulness in the earth now true Adamic rule has come. Moreover the vision includes the prolongation of a process whereby God and man grow in fellowship with one-another. Maturation, not simply constrained to life in the fallen creation, continues to characterise and define relationships in the renewed Kingdom, as Christ prepares the righteous for transition to incorruption, a partaking of the Divine nature. It is the time for reward and inheritance in the abode of former affliction and trial, the time for all life to increase and flourish in a bountiful earth, in the experience of resurrection hope and Divine fellowship. In this light, millenarian eschatology 'is not an embarrassing postscript',⁸⁶ as the transitional Kingdom moves the earth towards its consummation.

This doctrine however is not without problems. One might easily accuse the bishop of introducing his own peculiar divisions, by severing the resurrection of the righteous from that of the wicked. Indeed the separation of two bodily resurrections by the thousand-year reign has been rightly called the 'lynchpin of premillenianism'.⁸⁷ The first resurrection welcomes the righteous into Christ's Kingdom, whilst the second *follows* the regnum, announcing the Son's

⁸³ 5.35.1, p565, 5.35.2.

⁸⁴ In fulfilment of Isaiah 54:11-14 and 65:18-23.

⁸⁵ 5.35.2, p565 [Isaiah 49:16, Galatians 4:26, Revelation 21:2], 5.34.4.

⁸⁶ Osborn: *Irenaeus*, p139.

⁸⁷ S.Grenz: *The Millennial Maze*, Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1992, p128.

final judgement before He delivers the Kingdom to the Father. In practice Irenaeus propounds a division of the παρουσία and the παλιγγενεσία, the return of Christ and the consummation, seeing in 1Corinthians 15:24-8 and Revelation 20:1-10 a time-lag between Christ's return and final judgement. On such a reading, 1Corinthians 15:25 describes Christ the Priest-King's subjugation of His enemies during the course of His *millennial* rule, before He hands all authority to the Father. Only after this Kingdom comes the final expulsion of evil. 'Such textual reading however is fraught with difficulties and leaves several unanswered questions. Verses 24-5 suggest no temporal division between Christ's reign and the subjection of His enemies, describing instead Christ's ascension-enthronement and heavenly session, 'there is...nothing to suggest this developing reign of Christ falls between the *parousia* and the End'.⁸⁸ What is more, if death's destruction as the final enemy (v26) comes with the resurrection of Christ's people, it cannot then *precede* the subjugation of all Christ's foes in a proposed millennial reign. Rather, it seems better to interpret verse 24's 'εἶτα τὸ τέλος' as sequential in *sense* not chronology.⁸⁹ Neither is it apparent that Revelation 20:1-10 describes a millennial rule *on earth*, rather than the Church's ongoing rule with Christ in heaven. Instead the apostle John seems here 'concerned with *present* realities – the apparent defeat of the martyrs and their real triumph'.⁹⁰ The language of 'Satan bound' may well recall his rout at the hands of the incarnate Christ (Matthew 12:29, Mark 3:27, Luke 10:17-18, John 12:31), whilst 'the first resurrection' may denote *spiritual* regeneration, as Augustine claimed, the soul's rebirth into Christ (though others read the twofold ζάω in v4-5 as corporeal rising).⁹¹ Though difficulties cloud the debate on both sides, it is problematic to subdivide the general resurrection into two chronologically distinguished events (the righteous pre- and the wicked post-regnum). Many questions remain unanswered by the Irenaeian position; how can it be that evil is still present in the millennial age? Do unbelievers live and die alongside believers already possessing the spiritual body? Does death continue, though only for unbelievers? Is there freedom to receive Christ during this time, prompting bodily resurrection to occur throughout the thousand years? The required division between παρουσία and Death's destruction in final judgement remains dubitable. It also leaves the hope of bodily resurrection inevitably detached from *final* consummation, with the spiritual body received *before* the recreation of the heavens and earth. The אֶתְמֶלְכָהּ-אֶתְמֶלְכָהּ link would be preserved, but only via the *thousand-year* Kingdom. And this we might say epitomizes the problem, as biblical texts are transposed away from the eschatological hope of new creation towards the regnum, leaving Irenaeus saying very little about our *eternal* hope

⁸⁸ C.K.Barrett: *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, London: A&C Black, 1994, p357. Temporal delay also complicates the reading of John 5:28-9.

⁸⁹ G.Fee: *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987, p753-4, Harris: *Resurrection*, p179-80.

⁹⁰ Italics mine, L.Morris: *Revelation*, TNTC, Leicester: IVP, 1997, p227-35.

⁹¹ Augustine: *City of God*, Bk 20.9 espouses a-millenarianism, Mounce veers towards pre-millenarianism (Mounce: *The Book of Revelation*, NICNT, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988, p366).

(save to presume its glory beyond Christ's Kingdom). The earthly Kingdom may prepare for the new heavens and earth, but we receive no real account of final reality.

One might tentatively suggest that pre-millenarianism best expressed Irenaeus' desire to formulate an eschatology of greatest contrast to Gnosticism. According to Arthur Wood,

It ought also to be borne in mind that the strong emphasis of Irenaeus on the literal fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the Millennium were no doubt conditioned to some degree by the fact that he was contending against the Gnostic heretics, who denied the redeemability of the material.⁹²

Charles Hill makes the same point, all the more strongly for his claim that Irenaeian chiliasm actually departs from the Early Church's traditional eschatology,

The doctrine of chiliasm was tailor-made for refuting Gnostics, providing at once a tremendous apologetic for the goodness of the material creation and, with its attendant conception of the intermediate state, an antidote to the aggravating Gnostic pretensions to a super-celestial existence after death.⁹³

For all these lingering issues, Irenaeus' millenarianism does preserve a necessary continuity in the transition from old to new creation. The question remains however whether the earthly Kingdom invites more problems than it solves. Though continuity is essential to transformation, a reapplication of Irenaeus' millennial language to the *new creation* would also parry Gnosticism's corrosive division of creation and redemption, whilst avoiding many of the difficulties of pre-millenarianism. Furthermore it would avoid what appears an inherent chiliastic danger, and an ironic charge to make of the bishop; namely the tendency to distance eschatological expectation from the completed ministry of Christ's cross and resurrection. This alternative proposal, whilst not weakening Irenaeian recapitulation, might better reflect Scripture's juxtaposition of Christ's *παρουσία* with the final defeat of death, the realization of bodily resurrection and the certainty of coming judgement.

Resurrection in the One

Irenaeian eschatology is anchored in the repeated Scriptural assertion that the resurrection of the One brings the resurrection of the many. It is the Man who both died and was raised whose prerogative it is to judge the living and the dead (Acts 10:40-2, 17:31, Romans 14:9, Revelation 1:18). The resurrection of the Christ as last Adam anticipates the final Day for all in Adam. But the future resurrection of Adam's children does not ensure universal *fellowship* with Him

⁹² A.S.Wood: 'The Eschatology of Irenaeus', *EQ*, vol 41, 1969, p30-41 [p38].

⁹³ C.E.Hill: *Regnum Caelorum: Patterns of Future Hope in early Christianity*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992, p188.

who holds the keys to Death and Hades. He who was dead but is alive for evermore effects a universal resurrection to both salvation *and* judgement. The Irenaean vision is universal but not universalist, distancing the bishop from exponents of an all-inclusive maturing of the cosmos. Instead, there is universal resurrection of the righteous *and* wicked (though with temporal distinction between the Church's transition to σῶμα πνευματικόν at the outset of Christ's Kingdom and the resurrection of unbelievers to final judgment at its end).

The resurrection is still to come, contra Gnostic-like denials evinced in Corinth, Athens and Ephesus (1Corinthians 15:12-16, Acts 17:32, 2Timothy 2:18). For resurrection has come to pass πρὸ καιροῦ in the Man Jesus Christ. This is the logic of recapitulation, as He the Son of Adam summates humanity's destined story. Thus O'Donovan can say, 'in proclaiming the resurrection of Christ, the apostles proclaimed also the resurrection of mankind in Christ; and in proclaiming the resurrection of mankind, they proclaimed the renewal of all creation with him'.⁹⁴ The resurrection of the One Man secures the future of the many, as testified repeatedly.⁹⁵ For only He whom the Father receives can unloose the scroll in John's heavenly vision, securing the τέλος of a creation He has redeemed. History remains in the balance, until He acts as glorified Lord, 'how can we enter into the joy of creation when we do not know the meaning of creation's history? It is hidden from us until the Lion of Judah, who is also the slain Lamb, unseals its meaning'.⁹⁶ Hence on the Day of Christ, YHWH will literally rend the heavens and come down, 'to raise up anew all flesh of the whole human race, in order that to Christ Jesus, our Lord, and God, and Saviour, and King, according to the will of the invisible Father, "every knee should bow"'.⁹⁷ Then Christ's intercession for His worldwide Church will be manifest, bringing to fullness the organic connection between both resurrections, conveyed in the ἀπαρχή image of firstfruits and harvest.⁹⁸ For Christ is raised on the day following the Sabbath, the first ripe sheaf offered to the Father, in preparation for the full harvest to come.⁹⁹ The truth enables Jewett on Philippians 3:20-21 to say, 'Paul shows that the present humility in the body has divine purpose since it enables one to pass through the same destiny as Christ had'.¹⁰⁰

Neither is it novel for judgement to belong to the Son. Resolved to see Incarnation as *extending* the Son's eternal mediation, Irenaeus attributes earlier acts of judgement to the pre-incarnate Logos, maintaining it was the Son who commissioned the deluge and rained down fire upon Sodom and Gomorrah, only to warn in later days of greater judgement upon those who refuse to

⁹⁴ O'Donovan: *Resurrection*, p31.

⁹⁵ See Luke 14:14, John 11:24, Acts 2:31, 23:6 on this Jewish hope, Matthew 27:53, John 11:25, Acts 4:2,33, 17:18,31, 24:15,21 1 Corinthians 15:12-16,21, Philippians 3:20-1 on the hope realized πρὸ καιροῦ in the Christ.

⁹⁶ O'Donovan: *Resurrection*, p56 [Revelation 5:1-4].

⁹⁷ 1.10.1, p330, see Isaiah 64:1-2, Philippians 1:6,10, 2:16.

⁹⁸ Gaffin: *Resurrection*, p33-40 [Exodus 23:19, Leviticus 23:10, Deuteronomy 18:4, 26:2,10, Matthew 27:51-3].

⁹⁹ Leviticus 23:10-11, Matthew 28:1, Mark 16:1, 1 Corinthians 15:12-19, 2 Corinthians 4:14, 1 Thessalonians 4:14.

¹⁰⁰ Jewett: *Anthropological Terms*, p253.

believe His *incarnate* wonders.¹⁰¹ Final judgement is thus consistent with the one οἰκονομία, extending the Son's eternal mediation as Judge on the day He is exalted over all flesh, 'the Saviour of those who are saved, and the Judge of those who are judged...sending into eternal fire those who transform the truth, and despise His Father and His advent'.¹⁰² The Son's final act of righteous judgement will manifest the glory of His Father, 'and therefore the righteous judgment of God [shall fall] upon all who...have seen, but have not...believed'.¹⁰³ Here again is an implicit challenge to a contemporary Church which so rarely expounds sin as sin against the *eternal Son*, who by always executing the Father's judgement confirms the unity of Divine action across the one covenant.

Whether to salvation or judgement, this future resurrection 'completes' the original formation of man. Far from extrapolating Adam's children from the first creation, resurrection confirms the dynamic relation intended between protology and eschatology. It simply refashions what Irenaeus calls the *greater* miracle of the first creation,

Surely it is much more difficult and incredible, from non-existent bones, and nerves, and veins, and the rest of man's organization...to make man an animated and rational creature, *than to reintegrate again that which had been created* and then afterwards decomposed into earth...having thus passed into those [elements] from which man, who had no previous existence, was formed.¹⁰⁴

For resurrection, exposing arrogant claims to self-reliance, confirms human ontology as always anchored in the triune God. The miracle is patterned in a bare grain's obedience to the Divine command,

As a bare grain is sown, and, germinating by the command of God its Creator, rises again, clothed upon and glorious, but not before it has died and suffered decomposition, and become mingled with the earth; so...we have not entertained a vain belief in the resurrection of the body.¹⁰⁵

This reintegration of soul and body in final resurrection unmasks the illogicality of a Gnostic anthropology, whereby righteous souls perform deeds in bodies subsequently declared unfit for salvation. In the bishop's oft quoted words,

But if souls would have perished unless they had been righteous, then righteousness must have power to save the bodies also (which these souls inhabited); for why should it not save them, since they, too, participated in righteousness?¹⁰⁶

Bodily resurrection therefore emerges, albeit implicitly, even from the shadows of Gnostic thought. Life lived in the body, whether righteous or not, will continue in future corporeal

¹⁰¹ 4.36.4 [Matthew 11:23-4, Luke 10:12] (Genesis 19:24 mentions two Persons denoted יְהוָה).

¹⁰² 3.4.2, p417, 3.12.7 [Acts 10:37-44], 4.33.13 [Isaiah 2:17], 4.22.2.

¹⁰³ 4.6.5, p467-8.

¹⁰⁴ Italics mine, 5.3.2, p529.

¹⁰⁵ Fragment XII, p570, 5.2.3.

¹⁰⁶ 2.29.1, p402, 2.29.2, chapter 1, p24, footnote 89.

existence. From a believer's perspective, it is faith in God's power to reintegrate His original formation which equips the martyrs in extreme persecution, enabling the future Augustine to answer those bent upon the Church's slaughter, 'we have the assurance that the ravenous beasts will not hinder the resurrection of bodies of which not a single hair of the head will perish'.¹⁰⁷ For resurrection is neither the assumption of a body *ex nihilo*, nor the Hellenic survival of a disembodied mind, but the intended re-composition of Adam's original formation into a transformed σῶμα πνευματικόν. Put rhetorically, 'for what is more ignoble than dead flesh? Or, on the other hand, what is more glorious than the same when it arises and partakes of incorruption?'¹⁰⁸

This eschatological re-composition however does not preclude an eternal separation of righteous and wicked. On this Irenaeus is clear, 'the Son comes indeed alike to all, but...for the purpose of judging, and separating the believing from the unbelieving'.¹⁰⁹ There is a universal testimony of Father and Son, which brings salvation for all who believe and condemnation for all who refuse. On the Day the Lord divides Adam's children, 'the fashion of the whole world must...pass away, when the time of its disappearance has come, in order that the fruit indeed may be gathered into the garner, but the chaff, left behind, may be consumed by fire'.¹¹⁰ Moreover, on the Day condemnation falls upon the unrighteous, the Lord will assess His own people's labours. Recalling the parable of the tenants Irenaeus claims,

The Son shall come in the glory of the Father, requiring from His stewards and dispensers the money which He had entrusted to them, with usury; and from those to whom He had given most shall He demand most.¹¹¹

The servants must remain prepared, attentive, watchful, anticipating the Master's return, lest failure brings reprimand.¹¹² The bishop rightly reminds the universal Church of her responsibilities of stewardship. The Son who brought judgement in the days of Noah and Lot will then extend His judgement upon all who refuse the apostolic witness.¹¹³ Then the Gnostics amongst others, unable to rescind the corporeal resurrection they currently deny, will be condemned for their falsehood as they finally acknowledge the Lord,

Yet, reluctant as they may be, these men shall one day rise again in the flesh, to confess the power of Him who raises them from the dead; but they shall not be numbered among the righteous on account of their unbelief.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁷ Augustine: *City*, Bk 1.12, p21.

¹⁰⁸ 5.7.2, p535.

¹⁰⁹ 5.27.1, p556 [Matthew 10:25, 13:30,40-3, 25:31-46, Luke 17:34].

¹¹⁰ 4.4.3, p465-6, 4.6.7, 4.40.2.

¹¹¹ 4.27.2, p499.

¹¹² 4.37.3 [Luke 12:35-47]. Note Paul's pre-eminent desire to win the Lord's approval on that Day (2 Corinthians 5:9-10, Galatians 1:10, Philippians 1:20).

¹¹³ 4.36.3 [Matthew 11:23-4, Luke 17:26-30], *Demonstration* §60 [Isaiah 11:3-5].

¹¹⁴ 1.22.1, p347, 2.19.2, p385.

Irenaeus is therefore clear that all who deny the true Christ will exhaust their time of mercy.¹¹⁵ This is not the eschatological vision of such as Clement or Origen, whose long painful purification of the passions introduces notions of purgatory and universalism, as the soul reaches the perfected ἀποκατάστασις that is the eternal contemplation of God.¹¹⁶ By contrast Irenaeus' universal resurrection is a resurrection to life *and* judgement, though a 'staggered' resurrection where the unrighteous are raised to second death *following* the resurrection of the righteous into Christ's regnum. This appears to introduce an unwarranted time-lag between παρουσία and End, bringing a needless asymmetry between resurrection to life and judgement. Preferable on this point is Augustine, who by interpreting the first resurrection as spiritual regeneration preserves simultaneity in final resurrection (whereby Revelation 20:13's 'Death' describes the righteous and 'Hades' the unrighteous dead brought before Christ).¹¹⁷

Whatever the chronological intricacies of resurrection, final judgement secures a befitting abode for all Adam's offspring,

The Father...who has prepared the kingdom for the righteous, into which the Son has received those worthy of it, is He who has also prepared the furnace of fire, into which these angels commissioned by the Son of man shall send those persons who deserve it, according to God's command.¹¹⁸

The crucial point, against Gnosticism's determinist soteriology, is the denial of any *hidden* decree of election and reprobation. God made neither angels nor men apostate by nature, but Satan became 'the cause of apostasy to himself and others'.¹¹⁹ Those who pursue apostasy become the devil's sons, disinheriting themselves from their Creator. The offer of Divine blessing or wrath requires real human decision,

To as many as continue in their love towards God, does He grant communion with Him...but on as many as, according to their own choice, depart from God, He inflicts that separation from Himself which they have chosen of their own accord.¹²⁰

It is we who risk defrauding ourselves of the royal Supper, who like Pharaoh become hardened of heart once we respond in unbelief. It is because this hardening *follows* the Lord's initial diagnosis (Exodus 3:19-20, 5:2, 7:3-4) that Irenaeus can say, 'those who shun the light have a place worthy of their flight; and those who fly from eternal rest, have a habitation in accordance with their fleeing'.¹²¹ The resultant Divine judgement is one of broken irretrievable fellowship, as the unrighteous 'deprives himself of [the privilege of] continuance for ever and ever'.¹²²

¹¹⁵ 4.33.3, 4.33.5-7.

¹¹⁶ Clement: *Stromata*, Bk 6.14, Origen: *De Principiis*, Bk 1.6.3.

¹¹⁷ Augustine: *City*, 2.20.7, 15.

¹¹⁸ 4.40.2, p524.

¹¹⁹ 4.41.2, p524, 4.41.1, 3 [Matthew 13:38, 23:33, John 8:44].

¹²⁰ 5.27.2, p556, 4.6.5.

¹²¹ 4.39.4, p523, 4.29.2.

¹²² 2.43.3, p412.

Neither is this termination of 'life' an early Church espousal of annihilationism over against eternal punishment, because 'life' involves privileged fellowship with the triune God rather than simple corporeal longevity. The question however remains whether this Divine acceptance of human decision-making, though rightly refuting Gnostic pre-determinism, sufficiently outlines Scripture's teaching concerning the nature of judgement. To his credit, Irenaeus does acknowledge that Pharaoh's faithlessness leads to an *active* Divine hardening of his heart.¹²³ But one should not forget Paul's synopsis of fallen life, where God responds to human rebellion by actively *delivering* humanity to the poison of sin (the troubling phrase παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεός is repeated in Romans 1:24,26,28). Moreover Divine wrath *remains* upon those who refuse the Son (John 3:36), in a manner more active than the bishop suggests.¹²⁴ It is right to say judgement secures a befitting abode. But we must also remember that the Judge has authority to cast into hell (Luke 12:5).

As to the nature of future existence, Irenaeus contends that bodily resurrection, whether to salvation or judgement, secures an *eternal* abode. The Lord 'judges for eternity those whom He doth judge, and lets go free for eternity those whom He does let go free'.¹²⁵ In the schema of a maturing creation, as temporal blessing is transformed into eternal bliss, so conversely 'the punishment of those who do not believe the Word of God, and despise His advent, and are turned away backwards, is increased; being not merely temporal, but rendered also eternal'.¹²⁶ The Lord Himself applies αἰώνιος to both life and judgement (Matthew 25:41,46), suggesting co-temporality to blessing and punishment. The *everlasting* destruction of 2Thessalonians 1:9 also juxtaposes 'destruction' language with eternal torment.¹²⁷ This is the creedal faith of the Church, the announcement of two everlasting futures.¹²⁸ Regarding this final judgement and contra Augustine's conception of election, Irenaeus is clear 'that eternal fire was not originally prepared for man, but for him who beguiled man...for him...who is chief of the apostasy, and for those angels who became apostates along with him'.¹²⁹ The curse fell upon the serpent, not Adam. But the judgement does await those who share Satan's rebellion, including many Gnostic teachers. The punishment brings not future extinction but eternal death. In this at least, Augustine follows Irenaeus' conviction that, though the chasm between life and punishment begins for souls at death, the experience of embodiment attends final resurrection,

For the souls of the faithful, when separated from the body, are at rest, while the souls of the wicked are paying their penalty, until the bodies of the righteous come to life again for

¹²³ 4.29.1-2, Exodus 3:19-20 is the diagnosis, before Divine (4:21, 7:3, 10:1, 11:10, 14:4,8,17) and human hardening (8:15,19,32, 9:7,34).

¹²⁴ Despite the reference in 4.27.4 [2 Thessalonians 1:6-10].

¹²⁵ 4.28.3, p501.

¹²⁶ 4.28.2, p501 [Matthew 25:34,41], 4.28.1.

¹²⁷ P.Head 'The Duration of Divine Judgement', in Brower/Elliott: *The Reader*, p225-7. Also Augustine: *City*, Bk 21.23.

¹²⁸ 1.10.1.

¹²⁹ 3.23.3, p456, 4.40.1.

eternal life, and the bodies of the wicked rise to be consigned to the eternal, the second, death.¹³⁰

At final resurrection, both 'life' and 'judgement' become corporeal, ensuring that the connection between $\alpha\lambda\alpha\iota\omega\varsigma$ and $\kappa\rho\alpha\tau\epsilon\iota\alpha$ is never broken. Yet despite this clarity, Irenaeus has been curiously read as an exponent of universalism. In particular Hick, drawing false connections between the bishop and Schleiermacher, claims that so-called 'Irenaean thinkers...have been inclined to see the doctrine of eternal hell, with its implicates of permanently unexpiated sin and unending suffering, as rendering a Christian theodicy impossible'.¹³¹ Eternal hell, it is argued, would limit God in either goodness or power. A Christian theodicy apparently compels us to repudiate the doctrine,

We must thus affirm in faith that there will in the final accounting be no personal life that is unperfected and no suffering that has not eventually become a phase in the fulfilment of God's good purpose. Only so, I suggest, is it possible to believe both in the perfect goodness of God and in His unlimited capacity to perform His will. For if there are finally wasted lives and finally unredeemed sufferings, either God is not perfect in love or He is not sovereign in rule over His creation.¹³²

What Hick calls an Irenaean theology requires *all* human beings ultimately to attain the heavenly state, since hell would 'set up a sempiternal dualism between God, on the one hand, and perpetual sin and pain on the other'.¹³³ What Hick has done is to prolong Irenaean 'maturation' into a post-death experience of purgation,

For the Irenaean type of theology rejects the thought that men are at death distributed to an eternal heaven or hell. It thinks instead in terms of continued responsible *life in which the soul-making process continues in other environments beyond this world*. Thus it speaks of an intermediate state between this present life and the ultimate heavenly state – the traditional catholic doctrine of purgatory being itself an approach to this idea.¹³⁴

In truth however it is of course Hick who is the (Gnostic) dualist, since he attempts to posit evil's existence as independent of the Creator. By denying a priori the possibility of Divine theodicy in acts of judgement, he rejects Scripture's testimony to a Lord declared right *precisely in His role as Judge* (Psalm 51:3-4). Hick, unlike the Church father to whom he spuriously appeals, has parted ways with the God of Scripture.

Concluding this our sixth chapter, we have been reminded how the Man of heaven secures the project of creation by His bodily conquest of the final enemy. Yet the resurrected Christ is the $\alpha\pi\alpha\rho\chi\eta$ of a renewed cosmos, guaranteeing both the promised harvest and its temporal deferment. The Delay before the $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ exists for both the universal Church and the cosmos

¹³⁰ Augustine: *City*, Bk 12.13, p517.

¹³¹ Hick: *Evil*, p237, *Universe of Faiths*, p72.

¹³² Hick: *Evil*, p340.

¹³³ Hick: 'Coherence and Love of God', p525, *Philosophy of Religion*, p48.

¹³⁴ *Italics mine*, Hick: *Death*, p369-70. Baillie speaks similarly, as if the doctrine of final judgement introduces evil as an eternal element standing in dualistic opposition to God (*Life Everlasting*, p243-4).

itself, as history moves towards final resurrection. Neither is this delay before the ingathering without purpose, since the Church learns to flourish in the midst of persecution, a people living not as disembodied spirits, but as those whose flesh is indwelt and empowered by the Spirit of God. The Church attends the resurrection hope in earth and heaven, as the souls who have died in Christ await final embodiment beyond their present heavenly fellowship, their perpetual cry craving a corporeal future. The groanings of an expectant Church echo in a creation subjected to futility by a faithless lord, awaiting its liberation by Him whose obedience to the Father brought true Adamic rule. Christ's return inaugurates the revelation of the sons of God, as they assume their resurrection body. In the Irenaeian scheme, progression towards final consummation continues in the thousand-year reign of Christ's earthly Kingdom, where the saints enjoy their reward in a liberated fruitful and harmonious creation, growing evermore accustomed to the glory of God. However one is to understand the regnum, this expansive eschatological hope is by no means universalist. For with the close of the thousand years comes the final proclamation of Christ's universal Lordship by the exercise of final judgement, as He the last Adam calls to account all Adam's children, sealing by the Spirit their eternal bodily existence, whether to Divine fellowship that is life or to the judgement of death. The future of creation is clear, leaving us to ponder Psalm 95's ongoing refrain: Σήμερον ἐὰν τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ ἀκούσητε, Μὴ σκληρύνητε τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Psalm 95:7-8 [LXX: 94], Hebrews 3:15, 4:7.

CHAPTER 7: 'THE SPIRITUAL MAN'

But where the Spirit of the Father is, there is a living man...[there is] the flesh possessed by the Spirit ...adopting the quality of the Spirit, being made conformable to the Word of God.

(5.9.3)

Having explored in chapter six both the Church's and the cosmic experience of purposeful delay before παλιγγενεσία, the renewal of all things at Christ's appearance, we turn our attention to the project's consummation for His people, the transformation of the σῶμα ψυχικόν into the σῶμα πνευματικόν. Only then is the dwelling of God veritably with Adam's children, when fellowship between Creator and created, Divine and human, spiritual and material, is complete in the spiritual body. Our deliberations, as for Irenaeus, must be anchored in the apostle's teaching on the resurrection (1Corinthians 15). Indeed this chapter above all others confirms the *corporeality* of Christian hope. Jewett is right to say of Paul, 'this unspoken assumption – that the body is the basis of relationship – seems to lie behind his entire discussion of the resurrection...Body in 1Cor 15 is the divinely given basis of relationship'.¹ The apostle addresses Corinth's spurious spirituality, refuting what has been called both resuscitatory and spiritual reductionism,² by outlining an eternal *corporeal* hope not corruptible but incorruptible, not ψυχικός but πνευματικός, not conformed to the man of dust but the Man of heaven, the true Image of God. The spiritual body, affirming this transformation from one order to another, summarizes the journey of creation projected from the outset by the triune God.

An Incorruptible Body

It would appear that Paul's resurrection teaching in his Corinthian correspondence confronts a first century spirituality whose themes prefigure those of varied Gnostic teachers, who in Irenaeus' words, 'disallow a resurrection affecting *the whole man*...and...remove it from the midst [of the Christian scheme]'.³ What we might call Corinthian 'proto-Gnostics',⁴ depicting believers' resurrection as a past event, seemingly propound an ultimate disembodiment, where the soul/spirit freed from corporeality at death needed no eschatological resurrection from the dead. Harris, Lampe and Fee amongst others argue this Corinthian analysis.⁵ In this case, the connections to Irenaeus' day are yet more striking. Within a broader outlook, we might say that

¹ Jewett: *Anthropological Terms*, p267.

² Polkinghorne: *Science*, p115.

³ Italics mine, 5.31.1, p560.

⁴ Martin argues for this term, since Gnosticism would not yet have been a delineable social movement in the mid 1st century AD (Martin: *Corinthian Body*, p71).

⁵ Harris: *Resurrection*, p13, Lampe: 'Spiritual Body', p104, Fee: *Corinthians*, p715, 778 [1 Corinthians 4:8].

under-girding the Corinthian correspondence was an ongoing debate surrounding the term πνευματικός. Corinthian believers certainly *claimed* γνῶσις (1Corinthians 1:5, 8:1, 13:2,8), but their apparent espousal of bodiless post-death existence betrayed an ironically shameful ‘ignorance’ (ἄγνοσία: 15:34), since it propounded an eschatology akin to ‘perishing’ (ἀπόλλυμι: 15:18). This ‘ignorance’ reappears in a present-day Church, whose widespread neglect of eschatology stands uncomfortably close to Corinthian denials. One is reminded of the philosopher Ayer’s insightful words,

The admission that personal identity through time requires the identity of a body is a surprising feature of Christianity. I call it surprising because it seems to me that Christians are apt to forget that the resurrection of the body is an element in their creed.⁶

The problem comes whenever the Church, in Corinth as often today, unhinges its eschatology from Christ. For the persistent repetition of νεκρός and σῶμα throughout the resurrection chapter,⁷ reminds us that only He defines resurrection as corporeal reconstitution from the dead. The gospel of salvation rests upon the real death, burial, resurrection and appearances of Jesus Christ the Lord, preached by prophets and apostles and received by the Church (1Corinthians 15:1-11).

Therefore in answer to the Gnostics and confusions of our own day, the Irenaeian call to locate Christian hope wholly in the resurrected Christ finds in 1Corinthians 15 wholehearted apostolic precedence. For once Christ is corporeally raised, resurrection from death cannot be denied (15:12). This is the chapter’s unrelenting logic, an apostolic message preached throughout the Scriptures (v1-11). Indeed faith in Christ would be pitiable if the dead were not raised, since Christ would have perished unjustified (v12-19). But Christ *has* been raised as first-fruits of His people, subjecting at His return all things to Himself (v20-8). Without this resurrection, it would be senseless to live for Christ only in this life (v29-34). Then turning to the resurrection body, Paul recognises a specific glory assigned to bodies even in this *present* creation, which anticipates in turn a more glorious body overflowing with the Spirit (v35-44). Cosmic history is the journey from man of dust to Man of heaven (v45-9), a necessary bodily transformation from perishable to imperishable, that Death might be destroyed (v50-7). It is this gospel that brings enduring assurance in the Lord (v58), as typified in Irenaeus’ own martyrdom, since the future somatic resurrection of believers rests entirely upon the past somatic resurrection of the Christ (15:12-13). And His resurrection, as Irenaeus rightly contends, is an intra-Trinitarian affair; it is the *Father’s* public approval of His Son, executed by the Spirit, highlighted by the sevenfold repetition of the passive ἐγήγερα in this chapter alone.⁸ So on the third day the Father justifies His Son by raising Him from death, in an act of justification extending to Christ’s people (hence

⁶ A.J.Ayer: ‘What I saw when I was dead’, in ed Edwards: *Immortality*, p273.

⁷ The words appear thirteen and nine times respectively in 1Corinthians 15 alone.

⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:4,12,13,14,16,17,20.

Paul's use of the *perfect* passive). To deny Christ's resurrection is to deny His vindication. And faith in a Man unjustified would be *futile* faith, a faith still enslaved to sin, a μάταιος existence (15:17-19) trapped in this fallen first order.⁹ The implicit denial of bodily resurrection, whether in the first or twenty-first century, becomes a refusal of Divine justification. But Christ *has* been raised, according to the Father's will and in the Spirit's executing power, becoming in turn the first instalment of a dormant crop, a pledge of the whole. In Him is found a new order of justification and life, overturning the rule of an unwitting author of death (v20-2). It is this future resurrection in Christ that inspires wholehearted obedience within this *present* order (v29-34), in sure knowledge of a renewed creation through Him (v57).

Because human hope derives from the incarnate experience of Christ rather than mere philosophical assumptions, Irenaeus insists that incorruptibility is no *innate* human possession; 'man should never adopt a view supposing that incorruptibility belongs to us naturally, as if we were naturally like God'.¹⁰ Rather we have seen how *all* human life rests upon Divine grace. And if this *present* life requires the Breath of God to uphold creation, we can expect the Spirit to accomplish the greater grace of eternal bodily resurrection,

But if the present temporal life, which is of such an inferior nature to eternal life, can nevertheless effect so much as to quicken our mortal members, why should not eternal life, being much more powerful than this, vivify the flesh, which has already held converse with, and been accustomed to sustain, life?¹¹

The Breath of life denotes the first created order, bringing death to the flesh once it departs from the body. But the eschatological hope brings the permanence of the Spirit.¹² Both therefore speak of Divine mercy, as the ongoing dependence of flesh upon πνεῦμα preludes the extended gift of *eternal* resurrection. It is this Irenaeian distinction between breath and Spirit, the animation and vivification of flesh, that constitutes the two orders of existence summated in 1Corinthians 15:45; the first of ψυχὴ ζῶσα (soul-like existence animated by breath), the second of πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν (eternal existence vivified by the life-giving Spirit). The distinction of orders underpins v44's promised transition from ψυχικός to πνευματικός. In Witherington's words, 'Paul is contrasting two kinds of physical bodies – one empowered by a natural life principle; one totally empowered and enlivened by the Holy Spirit'.¹³ The 'natural life', we know, is still the work of grace. Yet transformation is needed from one to the other, sealed in the Christ whose resurrection attains the goal, both for Himself and for creation.

⁹ We have noted how μάταιος in LXX Ecclesiastes describes the post-lapsarian order (chap 6, p158, footnote 65).

¹⁰ 3.20.1, p450.

¹¹ 5.3.3, p530.

¹² 5.12.1-2. The point is well made, though the breath/Spirit distinction drawn from Isaiah 42:5 is suspect.

¹³ B. Witherington III: 'Transcending Imminence' in ed Brower *The Reader*, p178. Also Gaffin: *Resurrection*, p40.

The Spirit effects the transformation, by raising the Son from first to second order. The Spirit is after all the eschatological Agent, who works always to ‘perfect’ the creation. It is He who secures for Christ’s people the same transition. Pronouncing the *impotence* of flesh to possess the Kingdom without the investiture of the Spirit, Irenaeus reclaims from the Gnostics the much-abused 1Corinthians 15:50 (where mere ‘flesh and blood’ denotes creation’s first order). Rather, in echoes of Adam’s inherent lifelessness, we become heirs of Christ’s property only when the Spirit makes us *His* inheritance, ‘the flesh *does not* inherit, but *is* inherited...that the Spirit of God may take delight therein, as a bridegroom with a bride’.¹⁴ It is the Spirit’s final indwelling of flesh in bodily resurrection that sees the old members of Adam transformed into the image of the resurrected Christ, ‘now the final result of the work of the Spirit is the salvation of the flesh. For what other visible fruit is there of the invisible Spirit, than the rendering of the flesh mature and capable of incorruption?’¹⁵ Future somatic resurrection therefore ‘extends’ the Spirit’s operative Presence in the flesh of those redeemed, transforming present corporeal life into an incorruptible intimate fellowship with the eternal Son. Remembering our opening quotation, ‘where the Spirit of the Father is, there is a living man...[there is] the flesh possessed by the Spirit...adopting the quality of the Spirit, being made conformable to the Word of God’.¹⁶

In the incorruptible body, the Spirit therefore releases flesh from the dominion of Death the final enemy, completing the conquest of the serpent, as mortal corruptible life is finally clothed with an immortality that was always the Divine intent, ‘now, what is mortal shall be swallowed up of life, when the flesh is dead no longer, but remains living and incorruptible, hymning the praises of God, *who has perfected us for this very thing*.’¹⁷ This future somatic resurrection to life is not simply restoration after death, a return to this present age, for such an (albeit miraculous) event would leave creation untransformed. Rather, the resurrection to come is the ‘better’ resurrection of the future age (Hebrews 11:35). It is in Harris’ words the life of ἀφθαρσία, both incorruption and incorruptibility, the impossibility of degeneration and decay, as well as the life of ἀθανασία, both deathlessness and immortality, freedom from death and the inability to die again.¹⁸ As we see in the resurrected Christ, only the Spirit confers such incorruptibility and immortality upon an earthly body marked by ψυχή, raising a spiritual body that is the Divine victory against all forces opposing creation. The same Spirit ensures that death cannot blight the coming harvest, as the Church enters into the victory of Christ the first-fruits. Fee captures the hope as follows,

¹⁴ 5.9.4, p535.

¹⁵ 5.12.4, p538, 5.13.4.

¹⁶ 5.9.3, p535.

¹⁷ Italics mine, 3.23.7 [Psalm 91:13, 1 Corinthians 15:22-3,53-5], 5.13.2, p540.

¹⁸ Harris: *Resurrection*, p273-4 [ἀφθαρσία: Romans 2:7, 1 Corinthians 15:42,50,53-4, Ephesians 6:24, 2 Timothy 1:10], [ἀθανασία: 1 Corinthians 15:53-4, 1 Timothy 6:16].

As long as people die, God's own sovereign purposes are not yet fully realized. Hence the necessity of the resurrection – so as to destroy death by 'robbing' it of its store of those who do not belong to it because they belong to Christ.¹⁹

This final Resurrection day, when Death is wholly devoured by Christ's victory, will disclose Scripture's taunting as the true response of faith.²⁰ It is the promise of Ezekiel 37:1-14, where the πνεῦμα generates new life by joining together bones, restoring sinews and healing the flesh, captured in Jaschke's claim that 'der Geist wirkt in der Welt des Fleisches, um sie zu heiligen'.²¹ Members of Christ will then rise to incorruption, as the Spirit vindicates bodily life from the enticements of death, transforming the first creation into the life of the coming age, as resurrection becomes 'the end of man's creation'.²² Irenaeus' refusal to understand the Spirit as supernatural 'addition' to the purely human confirms Brunner's later words, that 'the real hope of the Christian is not of a life after death, but of the removal of death from life, of the resurrection of the dead, death being swallowed up in life, the victory of divine life over death'.²³

The eschatological Spirit, who raised the Son from death, thus vindicates bodily life. For the body of the risen Jesus is spiritual, imperishable, powerful and suffused with glory.²⁴ And the sure promise to His people of this same glorious body forbids Christ's enemies from destroying the Church, whenever martyrs' blood is spilled. However abused in the first creation, the body will be completed at the resurrection, 'a body wherein the victory of Christ has done its perfect work'.²⁵ Augustine can therefore affirm at the close of his opus magnum,

At the resurrection the saints will inhabit the actual bodies in which they suffered the hardships of this life on earth; yet these bodies will be such that no trace of corruption and frustration will affect their flesh, nor will any sorrow or mischance interfere in their felicity.²⁶

In the new created order no part of the body's potentiality will perish. Wherever parts may be dispersed, all deformities will be removed and corporeal substance transformed, as the Spirit completes 'the greater glory of promotion...the time when he shall become like Him who died for him'.²⁷ It is this final conformity to Christ that allows Ferguson to describe the future as, 'the energies of God the Spirit...fully released in the resurrection body; those who possess it consequently experience the end of the inertia and lethargy of the flesh, and an ease in serving God to the full capacity of their being'.²⁸

¹⁹ Fee: *1 Corinthians*, p757.

²⁰ Isaiah 25:8, Hosea 13:14, 1 Corinthians 15:54-5.

²¹ Jaschke: *Irenaeus*, p73.

²² Wingren: *Incarnation*, p154, 159, 175, 193.

²³ Brunner: *Mediator*, p570.

²⁴ Harris: *Resurrection*, p124 [Romans 8:11, 1 Corinthians 15:45-9, Romans 6:9, 2 Corinthians 4:6, Philippians 3:21].

²⁵ Ramsey: *Resurrection*, p107-8.

²⁶ Augustine: *City*, Bk 13.19, p532-3, Bk 1.12, 22.13-14, 17, 19-20, p1054-64.

²⁷ 3.20.2, p450.

²⁸ Ferguson: *Holy Spirit*, p252.

Irenaeus is in good company with his Christocentric formulation of the project of creation. For the apostle Paul thwarts Corinth's Gnostic-like eschatology, by focusing the debate precisely upon the determinative experience of the Christ. When the Spirit raises the Son from death, the future of the harvest is already assured. And refuting the Gnostics of his day, Irenaeus preserves this apostolic tradition, denying that incorruptibility is man's natural possession and distinguishing instead two distinct creation orders; flesh animated by breath and flesh raised to incorruption by the Spirit. The text so readily exploited by the Gnostics (1Corinthians 15:50) simply confirms that the first order of creation, flesh and blood without the Spirit, cannot inherit the Kingdom. Flesh is only released from death's dominion once the Spirit secures the future body, forever perfecting corporeal existence through resurrection. The Church's assurance of all that is to come is anchored in the resurrected Christ. Our own Church has much to learn from a bishop who not only restores Christological resurrection to the heart of eschatology, but who also expounds the *Trinitarian* nature of the hope. As for the Head so for the Body, after a purposed time-delay, resurrection will be the Father's act of justification, securing our conformity to the Son, in a conquest enabled by the Spirit. What is more, the future resurrection body will know no distinctions between 'corporeal' and 'spiritual'.

From ψυχικός to πνευματικός

One theme we have explored in detail is the way Irenaeian eschatology conceives of redemption as stretching far beyond the conquest of Adam's fall. For the schema creation-fall-redemption risks forgetting the 'incompleteness' of Genesis 2:7's account of the first creation, implicitly discarding the Divinely-intended transformation from one order to another, the movement from first Adam εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν to last Adam εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν. The failure to acknowledge this transformation lies partly behind the common complaint, accusing Irenaeus of underestimating Adam's sin and the horrors of the fall. But if the journey from first to last order under-girds the project, or to describe it alternatively, if Adam fashioned according to the Divine Image must also *grow* into the Image that is Christ, then the fall is reinterpreted as the archetypal, all-encompassing *refusal* of that calling, precipitating a thoroughgoing derailment of creation. Yet the project remains a journey to Christ-likeness, a redemption that overcomes and even surpasses the blasphemous disruption of Adamic disobedience. Transformation from corruption to incorruption, dishonour to glory, ψυχὴ to πνεῦμα involves not only the overthrow of Adam's failure, but the foreordained transition from old to new creation, intended by the Lord who first planted the garden. It is this purposeful intention that unmask the woodenness and awkwardness of a Gnostic eschatology whereby the spiritual is placed *from the outset* at the τέλος, without the transforming power of the eschatological Spirit. The approach, not restricted

to Gnostic texts, is echoed whenever the future hope is conceived as putting *back* the clock to life in the garden before man's temptation. Such common readings deny a journey forwards, a plan for transformation.

Instead creation is intended to advance from ψυχικός to πνευματικός, bringing not the destruction of flesh and blood but its Divine transformation through communion with the Spirit. At times the bishop explicitly indicates the journey stages, as when he says 'for there had been a necessity that, in the first place, a human being should be fashioned, and that what was fashioned should receive the soul; afterwards that it should thus receive the communion of the Spirit'.²⁹ The project dispels not the original handiwork but the lusts of the flesh perpetrated by post-lapsarian disorder, as full pneumatic life awaits final resurrection, 'then, rising through the Spirit's instrumentality, they become spiritual bodies, so that by the Spirit they possess a perpetual life'.³⁰ Only then, when soul and flesh are engrafted by the πνεῦμα θεοῦ, is man rendered truly 'spiritual', leaving Fantino to say, 'en effet, pour Irénée, être spirituel c'est vivre de l'Esprit de Dieu car c'est notre substance, c'est-à-dire le compose d'âme et de chair, qui, en recevant l'Esprit de Dieu, constitue l'homme spirituel'.³¹ This is the *necessary* transition from protology to eschatology, from first to last order, from psychic to spiritual, from Adam to Christ. It need not deride the first order, since the earthly bodies of Genesis 1 retain their own particular glory (1Corinthians 15:38-9), as do the heavenly bodies of sun, moon and stars (v40-1). In fact the diversity of corporeal life in this present creation anticipates the spiritual body to come. The pivotal term is *transformation*, since those alive at Christ's appearing need not die and be raised, yet must be 'changed' (ἀλλάσσω: 15:51-2).³² Indeed without this transformation the Gnostic exegesis of 1Corinthians 15:50 would be true, since the first order cannot inherit the Kingdom. This is why Paul employs the language of *necessity* (δεῖ: 15:53-4), where transformation to a new order becomes as central to the gospel as the Christ's own suffering, cross and resurrection.³³ 1Corinthians 15:45 encapsulates the project. Ψυχικός Adam, receiving life from the Divine breath, is only a 'type' of πνευματικός Christ, who accords life by the resurrection power of the Spirit. In Gaffin's words, ψυχή and πνεῦμα 'describe two comprehensive states of affairs, two orders of existence contrasted temporally. The one follows upon the other and together they encompass the whole of history'.³⁴

The movement from psychic to spiritual is not one of cosmological compulsion, but Divine intent. The transition conveys both continuity and difference. The spiritual body will certainly transcend its present counterpart as a plant transcends a seed, in what will be 'an enormous leap

²⁹ 5.12.2, p538 [1 Corinthians 15:45-6], 5.9.1-2, 5.10.2.

³⁰ 5.7.2, p533, 5.8.2, 5.12.3.

³¹ Fantino: 'Le Passage', p420.

³² Lampe: 'Paul's Concept' [1 Thessalonians 4:17, 1 Corinthians 15:51-4], p113.

³³ δεῖ appears in Matthew 16:21, Mark 8:31, 13:10, Luke 9:22, 24:7,44, John 3:14, 20:9.

³⁴ Gaffin: *Resurrection*, p83.

in quality'.³⁵ Yet the focus of the seed-plant analogy is identity not difference. Hick therefore abuses the image, by interpreting the transformation of seed into plant as one of radical discontinuity.³⁶ His conception of the spiritual body as 'the divine creation in another space of an exact psycho-physical "replica" of the deceased person'³⁷ is highly problematic. For such a conception becomes a *universal* hope, unrelated to Christ's rule as resurrected Lord and Τέλος of creation. Neither does it include any notion of responsiveness to the Spirit of God.³⁸ Hick's appeal to biblical terms fails to conceal his distinct lack of Christology. His *ex nihilo* eschatological copy of 'I' is rightly precluded by Irenaeus, since it negates the restoration of God's *original* handiwork,

The whole economy of salvation points to the transformation of flesh into incorruption. Unless this regeneration be possible, then God has neither restored the work of His hands nor taken possession of that which is His own.³⁹

Instead in the fullness of time the present body sown as bare grain upon the earth produces the resurrection plant, the 'same' creation in two modes of existence, as the old life yields to the fruitfulness of the new (1Corinthians 15:36, John 12:24). The image conveys a transformation within continuity, since the seed was always sown to become the plant. Life as ψυχὴ ζῶσα was never creation's end. The grain is sown in corruption and ruin, dishonour and weakness, a soul-like, psychic body (15:42-4) falling short of the Divine purpose, ever ignorant of the things of the Spirit.⁴⁰ Whereas the eschatological body is raised to incorruption, glory and power, a transformed body under the Spirit's ultimate eschatological rule. The first order of 1Corinthians 15:50 is conditioned by the man of dust, by all that is ψυχικός. But the eschatological order, marked by imperishability, glory and all that is πνευματικός, is anchored in the Man of heaven. And though the Gnostics agreed with Irenaeus over the existence of two orders, the Divine miracle rests in the intentioned *transition* from one to the other. Though still unable to inherit the Kingdom, mere flesh and blood *will* be transformed into pneumatic corporeal life by the eschatological Spirit. Thus whether awake or asleep, alive or dead at Christ's παρουσία, the Church will be changed into the incorruptible life of the future Kingdom (v52).⁴¹

This Irenaeian conception of the spiritual body is rather different from that of Origen. For Origen emphasizes the radical discontinuity of the spiritual body from present corporeality, since the immortal soul requires a very different existence to contemplate God.⁴² The point of continuity is found in one's unique εἶδος, produced by the soul to form a new resurrection body

³⁵ Lampe: 'Paul's Concept', p107.

³⁶ Hick: 'The Recreation of the Psycho-Physical Person' in ed Edwards: *Immortality*, p235-8.

³⁷ Hick: *Death and Eternal Life*, p279, *Faith and Knowledge*, p180-5, *Philosophy of Religion*, p100.

³⁸ Harris: *Resurrection*, p130-2.

³⁹ Osborn: *Irenaeus*, p226.

⁴⁰ For example 1 Corinthians 2:14, James 3:15, Jude 1:19.

⁴¹ Barrett, perceiving here Pauline confidence of *immediate* parousia, pushes the text beyond its meaning (1Corinthians, p381-2).

⁴² Origen: *De Principiis*, Bk 2.10.2, *Against Celsus*, Bk 5.18, 7.32.

recognizable as the same individual, even though underlying materiality cannot rise from death. The resurrection of the body does not therefore mean its reconstitution in fleshly form and substance. Its continuation lies not in the immutability of its physical constituents, but in their reorganization by means of an imperishable principle governed by the soul.⁴³ The resurrection body retains the same form (εἶδος), though the material substrata will differ, since the soul ‘needs a better garment for the purer ethereal and celestial regions’.⁴⁴ Though some like Gregory of Nyssa preserve Origen’s distinction between material corporeality forever in flux and the bodily εἶδος forever the same, many early theologians such as Jerome, Methodius, Cyril of Jerusalem and Hilary rightly accuse Origen of a Hellenic-like dualism, the undervaluing of corporeal life over against perceived heavenly reality, insisting instead that the resurrection body must be more than an incorruptible ‘form’.⁴⁵ The mainstream Early Church, along with Irenaeus, maintains that at the παρουσία Christ will reconstitute matter in final resurrection, whilst altering its eternal quality. Important for us however, against all Gnostic-like trends, is not simply Irenaeus’ reminder of the *material* nature of our eschatological hope, the assurance that the future brings vindication not annihilation of corporeal existence, but also that the movement from ψυχικός to πνευματικός was *always* intended. Lyon’s bishop challenges what we might call an essentially ‘static’, more Augustinian conception of eschatology, where world history, at least for the elect, is set in a framework of creation, fall and final restoration. Irenaeus by contrast reminds the Church that biblical eschatology seeks no return to a lost golden age, no mere reversal of a fateful day. History’s purpose lies in its journeying *forwards*, ever towards Christ’s return, in a genuine invitation to all Adam’s children, and the Church’s final transition from ψυχικός to πνευματικός.

Final resurrection therefore marks the triumph of the Spirit over old Adamic life, as the imperishable seed fully flowers into somatic life, completing the regeneration of God’s original handiwork. The σῶμα πνευματικόν concludes the process as one of Divine victory, ‘in the resurrection life the dominion of the Spirit extends over the whole man’.⁴⁶ The future body thus completes the Spirit’s governance, as He takes the hapless flesh to share in the inheritance of Christ. This is what Dahl describes as ‘somatic identity’, when the Spirit effects a σῶμα more broadly understood as ‘personality’,

When the Apostle speaks of a ‘spiritual body’...he means the human personality under the complete control of the Spirit...just as by ‘natural body’...he means the personality animated by an animal soul...and liable to creaturely frailty and the evil power of ‘the flesh’.⁴⁷

⁴³ Daley: *Early Church*, p50-4, Hardman: *Resurrection*, p19-22, Ramsey: *Resurrection*, p112.

⁴⁴ Kelly: *Doctrines*, p470-2.

⁴⁵ Kelly, p475-9.

⁴⁶ Wingren: *Incarnation*, p208, Osborn: *Irenaeus*, p227. This contra Harris’ bizarre supposition that the spiritual body is *progressively* formed in believers (p130).

⁴⁷ Dahl: *Resurrection*, p15, 94-5.

This is life in the resurrection body, the transformation from soul-lish to spiritual existence, an assurance of future triumph enabling the apostle Paul to live wholeheartedly for the risen Christ. By contrast, to deny this future is to live a very different life (Isaiah 22:13, 1Corinthians 15:32-4). This Christological hope of σῶμα πνευματικόν enables believers to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the Lord's work, knowing their labour is never 'in vain'.⁴⁸

This future transformation therefore secures an existence where corporeal life is perfectly subject to the Spirit. Irenaeus reminds us that this subjection means obeying a *Divine Person*, not a higher human quality. The Divine Spirit must not be confused with Hellenic assumptions regarding the priority of human spirit over body. Augustine however is prone to the error, whenever he describes the spiritual body as conditioned by an all-powerful obedient will rather than a member of the Godhead. Through such a lens, the heavenly city becomes a place where 'there will be a spiritual body with no cravings, a body subdued in every part *to the will*'.⁴⁹ This eschatological hope leaves God holding sway over us by a renewed human soul, rather than the indwelling πνεῦμα θεοῦ, 'will not *the soul* eventually have the power to raise the earthly body to a higher realm?'⁵⁰ This explicit lack of Pneumatology in Augustine's reading betrays a hope insufficiently informed by the incarnate Word, a hope averting its gaze from the resurrected Christ. For the σῶμα πνευματικόν is the ripened harvest of *Christ* the firstfruits, whose own resurrection meant not the raising of His human spirit over flesh, but rather the Holy Spirit as Executor of the Father's will coming in power upon Christ's body entombed, raising *Him* from somatic death. The spiritual body is not ruled by the human spirit, but 'is a body dependent on and controlled by the Spirit of God...that receives its supernatural life from the Spirit and is perfectly submissive or responsive to the Spirit'.⁵¹ This is resurrection life in creation's new order, which through the Son renders permanent the Spirit's prior visitations upon flesh. In Cullmann's words,

As long as this final completion is still to come, the Holy Spirit penetrates into the world of the body only temporarily; only temporarily are sickness and the power of death repelled. The raisings of the dead that are narrated in the New Testament have nothing final about them. The young man at Nain, Lazarus, and Tabitha are not raised in a spiritual body; they will again have to die as do all men. It is the unique meaning of the eschatological drama that only then will the dead really rise to live in a spiritual body, that only then does a creation emerge in which there is no longer any withering and decay.⁵²

If the temporary resurrection healings of Christ are not indicators of *future* corporeal incorruptibility, the incarnate Word becomes a mere physician, whose healing of the sick and the dead can only delay the clutches of a second death. The story is very different once the Spirit raises the Christ.

⁴⁸ Interestingly, κενός is repeated in 1 Corinthians 15:10,14,58.

⁴⁹ Italics mine, Augustine: *City*, Bk 19.17, p878, 13.20.

⁵⁰ Augustine: *City*, Bk 22.11, p1051, 19.27 [italics mine].

⁵¹ Harris: *Resurrection*, p147.

⁵² Cullmann: *Christology*, p142.

The Spirit's transforming work then is not simply the forming of Christ-like character, but the *conforming* of believers to Christ's somatic resurrection life. Conformity to Christ is both behavioural and corporeal. Both are requisite for 'perfection', lest we implicitly support a Gnostic disavowance of soul and body, where only our ethical life - but not our bodily existence - enjoys eschatological hope. Of course the spiritual body does entail perfected obedience, as when Scroggs affirms, 'to exist in a spiritual body also means to be a man who bears the powers and fruits of the Spirit, that is, to be a man perfectly related to God and neighbour'.⁵³ Yet this description *per se* is insufficient, since conformity to Christ's character is all too easily disengaged from Christ's somatic resurrection. Moule, it would appear, shares this discordant tendency, when he defines 'spiritual' only in terms of filial obedience and quality of relationship, rather than transformed material substance, 'man's destiny is viewed in terms of a transformation of soma by the Spirit of God, who produces in man the deeds and words of filial obedience'.⁵⁴ This again risks disavowing the Spirit's work of progressive sanctification from the final glory of somatic resurrection (with 1Corinthians 15:44's σῶμα πνευματικόν a clear reference to the latter). Fee captures rather better the duality of character and corporeal existence within the new order, where corporeal resurrection actually *facilitates* true worship of God, 'the transformed body, therefore, is not composed of "spirit"; it is a *body* adapted to the eschatological existence that is under the ultimate domination of the Spirit'.⁵⁵ The Church will be *bodily* conformed to the exalted Christ, whose own body according to Schep,

Is the glorious body of the life-giving Spirit. It is a spiritual body, a body not *qualified by* the flesh and bound to the earth as Adam's body was. The body of flesh of our exalted Lord is qualified by the Spirit, who dwells in it with all his fullness and through whom it is a center of heavenly, imperishable life, an inexhaustible source of heavenly energies.⁵⁶

The spiritual body therefore constitutes a corporeal life of wholehearted obedience to the Spirit, within a future order whose first-fruits is the resurrected Christ, a necessary transformation through resurrection to investiture (1Corinthians 15:42, 52-4). The Spirit's power, displayed in the initial act of raising the dead, will permanently sustain Christ's resurrection people, as the body sown and animated by ψυχή is raised and controlled by πνεῦμα. But this does not actually mean the awaited σῶμα πνευματικόν is constrained to live in heaven, as when Harris maintains, 'so great is the evidence of somatic variety in nature that if there is a physical body for man on earth, we can reasonably assume that God will provide a spiritual body for him in heaven'.⁵⁷ This relocation of the spiritual body simply reintroduces the Gnostic-like division of spiritual and material, by forgetting that the resurrected Christ, who is the first-fruits of σῶμα πνευματικόν, will not remain in heaven forever but will return to *earth*. This first order of

⁵³ Scroggs: *Last Adam*, p89.

⁵⁴ Moule: 'St Paul', p115. Dahl, one might argue, faces a similar charge [see p180, footnote 47].

⁵⁵ Fee: *1 Corinthians*, p786.

⁵⁶ Schep: *Resurrection Body*, p179.

⁵⁷ Harris: *Resurrection*, p118-20.

creation (which displays both heavenly and earthly bodies, v38-41) awaits the second, even as the first Adam awaits Another. Hence to restrict the spiritual body to heaven is to misplace the locus of resurrection hope. It is an incomplete *Christology* that fuels this typically contemporary misunderstanding, since it keeps the ascended Christ in heaven, forgetting the purpose of His return. Lampe guards against the false dichotomy,

The term ‘spiritual’ emphasizes that God’s Spirit is the *only* force that creates the new body. The creation of this new body is totally *beyond* all the possibilities of the present nature and creation. That is all that Paul wants to convey with this term.⁵⁸

For Irenaeus it means not setting redeemed flesh against the Spirit, but rather acknowledging that flesh is powerless to inherit without the Spirit,

We should not say that flesh and blood will take hold of the Kingdom, but rather that the Spirit will take hold of flesh and blood and lift them up into the Kingdom. Our flesh will not take possession of the Spirit, rather, the Spirit will take possession of our flesh and so transform it that, without ceasing to be flesh, it will be radiant with the glory of God.⁵⁹

For the spiritual body marks the time of investiture, after the first order life of flesh and blood and the nakedness of the paradisal state (note v53-4’s fourfold repetition of ἐνδύω). Full clothing means nothing less than assuming Christ’s spiritual body. Here is the transformation from ψυχικός to πνευματικός, in a project stretching beyond reversal of the fall to become the Spirit’s triumph over old Adamic life, a realized communion between flesh and Spirit, man and God, that sees the spiritual body in absolute obedience and conformity to the resurrected Christ.

In The Image of God

Remembering Irenaeus’ account of Adam as made according to the Divine Image that is Christ, we begin inevitably to consider the Divine Image of Genesis 1:26 as both protological reality and eschatological hope. Adam is formed according to the Image, yet must also grow into the Image by way of Divinely intended maturation. He does not by nature possess immortal glorious incorruptible life, but must find that life in the eternal Son. The Divine Image is the Son, who assumes in resurrection the promised spiritual body. In Ziesler’s words on Paul, “‘image of God’ belongs fundamentally not to the creation but to the new creation, to redemption, and to Christ’.⁶⁰ Christ is the project’s hub, whose ministry of incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension, completes for Adam’s sake the σῶμα πνευματικόν. Dunn explores 1Corinthians 15’s contrast between the two men,

⁵⁸ Lampe: ‘Paul’s Concept’, p109.

⁵⁹ Minns: *Irenaeus*, p77.

⁶⁰ J.A.Ziesler: ‘Anthropology of hope’, *ET* vol 90, Jan 1979, p104-9 [p108].

The contrast is between man the *recipient* of the breath of life which constitutes him a living being, and Christ the *giver* of the life of the age to come, the life of the Spirit – a role which became Christ's only with resurrection and exaltation. As the first Adam came into existence...at creation, the beginning of the old age, so the last Adam...came into existence at resurrection, the beginning of the age to come.⁶¹

The imperishable corporeal existence has already come to pass in the obedient victorious Son.⁶² He is the heart of the project, the true Image in whom Adam was always to find growth, summarized in the Irenaeian words,

Because the Word, the Maker of all things, had formed beforehand for Himself the future dispensation of the human race, connected with the Son of God; God having predestined that the first man should be of an animal nature, with this view, that he might be saved by the spiritual One.⁶³

The Son effects transformation from ψυχικός to πνευματικός, from one order of existence to another. He is always centre-stage. This perspective contrasts somewhat with Augustine, who envisages transformation as within created Adam's grasp *independent* of the incarnate Christ, when he claims Adam would remain ψυχὴ ζῶσα, 'until that body became spiritual as a reward for obedience'.⁶⁴ The Latin father fails to comprehend the *necessity* of Christ's incarnation *de facto* for securing the spiritual body for Adam's offspring, thereby displacing incarnational Christology from the project's heart. Christ comes only in response to Adam's failure, becoming the destined Pattern for Adam only in the light of redemption.⁶⁵ Irenaeus' challenge to the contemporary Church is precisely to see the centrality of Christ to the project *as a whole*, rather than cast Him simply as 'Redeemer figure' in the light of Adam's fall. Genesis 1:26 was never a static truth, but always a dynamic promise, awaiting fulfilment in the eternal Son.

Transformation into the Image of Christ means also reconciliation with the Father, since in Moule's words, 'that relationship of son to father which is, for "Adam", made possible only through "the final Adam", Jesus Christ, is the key to eternal life'.⁶⁶ For the perfect relation of sonship to God for which Adam was created is exemplified for Adam's children in Christ's obedient Sonship. And just as Christ's resurrection willed by the Father in the Spirit is the *vindication* of His obedience, so the Body of Christ that is the Church, in conformity to her Head, will share the Father's vindication of His Son, by receiving the resurrection body by the Spirit. The σῶμα πνευματικόν marks the Father's vindication of Christ's people. Christ the Image is thus realized in Adam's children only when flesh and soul are united in fellowship with the Spirit,

⁶¹ Dunn: *Christology*, p108.

⁶² Romans 8:11, 6:9, 2 Corinthians 4:6, Philippians 3:21.

⁶³ 3.22.3, p455.

⁶⁴ Augustine: *City*, Bk 13.23, p537.

⁶⁵ Augustine: *City*, Bk 10.29, 10.32.

⁶⁶ Moule: 'St Paul', p107.

When the spirit here blended with the soul is united to [God's] handiwork, the man is rendered spiritual and perfect because of the outpouring of the Spirit, and this is he who was made in the image and likeness of God.⁶⁷

Only when the Spirit resurrects believers in conformity to the spiritual Man is Genesis 1:26 fully accomplished.⁶⁸ Finally transformed into the Image of the Son we will share His splendid body, 'through a radical transformation, bodies that at present bear all the marks of frailty and mortality will become resplendent bodies bearing the impress of Christ's likeness'.⁶⁹ It is then we will be truly human, conformed not to the first but to the last Adam, not to the man of dust but the Man of heaven. In the words of Ferguson, 'the Spirit is given to glorify us; not just to "add" glory as a crown to what we are, but actually to transform the very constitution of our being so that we become glorious'.⁷⁰ For Christ became life-giving Spirit (1Corinthians 15:45), raised by the Spirit that He might breathe the same Spirit upon His own, surpassing the project's beginnings on the day the breath of life blew upon Adam (John 20:20-2). He 'came not to condemn the flesh, but 'to condemn sin, and to cast it, as now a condemned thing, away beyond the flesh...that He might call man forth into His own likeness, assigning him as [His own] imitator to God'.⁷¹ This is the redemption of creation, where the compassionate God takes full account of human infirmity, to hone man gradually after the Image of His victorious Son. As the earnest of the Spirit prompts the present call 'Abba', so His consummate grace sealed in final resurrection 'will render us like unto Him, and accomplish the will of the Father'.⁷² For the 'spiritual' must arise at the end of the project not at its beginning, even as the resurrection of the σῶμα πνευματικόν comes at the end of the obedient life of Christ.

Through this lens we see how ψυχικός and πνευματικός characterize two Divinely-intended orders, where the life-giving Spirit marked by the resurrected Christ defines the eschatological order of creation, the transformative redemption of God's original handiwork. Conditioning the two orders are two men, who produce in turn many descendants; the 'earthy' man of dust (Genesis 2:7) and the eschatological Man of heaven (1Corinthians 15:47). The first order of flesh and blood describes our frail perishable earthly condition.⁷³ But conformity to the Man of heaven means sharing in the vindication that is His own corporeal transformation. So with reference to v48, Barrett can say

This verse is not about morals, and does not declare that Christians will be morally like Christ (though doubtless they ought to be); it says that at the resurrection they will exchange natural bodies for spiritual bodies – and become a race of heavenly men.⁷⁴

⁶⁷ 5.6.1, p532, 5.10.1, 5.28.4.

⁶⁸ Romans 8:29, 1 Corinthians 15:39, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Colossians 3:9.

⁶⁹ Harris: *Resurrection*, p113.

⁷⁰ Ferguson: *Holy Spirit*, p249.

⁷¹ 3.20.2, p450.

⁷² 5.8.1, p533, 5.11.2.

⁷³ Matthew 16:17, Galatians 1:16, Ephesians 6:12, Hebrews 2:14.

⁷⁴ Barrett: *1 Corinthians*, p377.

Those who have borne the (pre- and post-lapsarian) image of the man of dust will, through resurrection in the Spirit, bear the Image of the Man from heaven (v49). We know that Paul's understanding of the two orders stretches beyond the paradigm of good-fallen-redeemed creation, to one which sees in 1Corinthians 15 a movement from old to new, dust to Spirit, acknowledged amongst others by Ziesler.⁷⁵ After all, not everything that describes the first order is unambiguously post-lapsarian. Some terms recall the events of Genesis 3; through Adam comes death (v21-2), a life characterized by corruption and ruin (v42), dishonour and weakness (v43). Yet the fact that Paul, like Irenaeus, has Genesis 2:7 as his backdrop leaves the Divine project to extend *beyond* the overcoming of death. The beauty of this first order anticipates the *greater* glory of resurrection. Whatever the wonders of the present, uncorrupted glory and power await the new age (v42-3), when corporeal life will be not just Spirit-filled but determined in every way by the Spirit (v44), as He who brooded over the first creation will wholly shape the renewed handiwork of God. The created man of dust (v47), a pre-lapsarian 'living creature' (v45), must still receive the Spirit's eschatological life. Bearing Adam's image thus speaks originally of the *incompletion* of Divine intent, not just post-lapsarian tragedy (v49). The first order of ψυχικός must precede πνευματικός (v46). Paul paints upon the broadest canvas, and Irenaeus follows suit.

A question however remains regarding 1Corinthians 15:47. Since in the Pauline movement from first to renewed creation, as the perishable progresses to imperishable, dishonour to glory, weakness to power, ψυχικός to πνευματικός, we see the man of dust destined for the Man of heaven. But if Paul understands the Man of heaven *solely* in eschatological terms, as asserted for example by Barrett, 'the heavenly Man with his spiritual body was not a Platonic pattern of humanity, but *an eschatological figure*',⁷⁶ this figure inevitably clashes with the Irenaeian claim that here is Christ the Origin, the eternal Man. If the Man of heaven is only the eschatological Man, Christ in His spiritual resurrection body, one cannot easily describe Him as eternal Logos. Moreover to view the σῶμα πνευματικόν as the eternal body of Christ would undercut the historical resurrection as the point of transformation. If Paul's title refers solely to Christ's proleptic eschatological rising, then Christ is no longer eternal Man in whose Image Adam was made the τύπος. Yet this 'second' Man, we are told, is ἐξ οὐρανοῦ. Though following Adam as incarnate One in the scheme of redemption, He *is* the Man of heaven. And this appears to echo the Johannine testimony to Christ as One who has come ἐπάνω (John 3:31), the eternal Man who came down from heaven, to become the eschatological Man raised by the Spirit upon the earth on the third day. In this light, Irenaeus' Christological movement from eternal Word to Word made flesh to Word κατὰ πνεῦμα (Romans 1:4), a movement from Son of God as eternal Man to Son of Adam to spiritual Man, is absolutely right. He the Man of heaven lives out the

⁷⁵ Ziesler: 'Anthropology', p106.

⁷⁶ Italics mine (Barrett: *1 Corinthians*, p375). Similarly Fee understands the term not with reference to origin, but to Christ's *eschatological* life begun at the resurrection (Fee: *1 Corinthians*, p791-2).

true Adamic life on earth, before the Father vindicates His ministry by the Spirit, securing proleptically in His resurrection the destined project of transformation. Since all things are fashioned through Him and sustained by Him, it is He who establishes the *one* project, bringing creation through His own journey of ‘maturation’, that the Father ‘shall be glorified in His handiwork, fitting it so as to be conformable to, and modelled after, His own Son’.⁷⁷

In conclusion then, the promised σῶμα πνευματικόν describes an incorruptible immortal corporeal existence, entirely possessed and directed by the Spirit, conforming Adam’s children to the resurrected Christ who is the Image of God. This glorious eschatological life, enabled by the eternal Word’s journey from incarnation to ascension, sees humanity partake of immortality, bringing to pass the promise in 2Peter 1:4 of sharing the Divine nature. Such eternal fellowship never risks conflating Creator and created, since God is always the gracious Giver and man the blessed recipient, in what is central to the one οἰκονομία,

And thus in all things God has the pre-eminence, who alone is uncreated, the first of all things, and the primary cause of the existence of all, while all other things remain under God’s subjection. But being in subjection to God is continuance in immortality, and immortality is the glory of the uncreated One. By this arrangement, therefore, and these harmonies, and a sequel of this nature, man, a created and organized being, is rendered after the image and likeness of the uncreated God.⁷⁸

The eternal fellowship between spiritual and material in the σῶμα πνευματικόν encapsulates the hope of a redeemed creation, since it expresses most fully the intended communion between man and God. Irenaeus has much to say to a contemporary Church often marked by Corinth’s Gnostic trends, where final bodily resurrection is so regularly neglected as to be almost denied. The bishop reminds us that promised conformity to Christ is both ethical *and* somatic, precisely because Christ’s resurrection *is* His vindication by the Father. To ponder redemption without reference to the σῶμα πνευματικόν is thus to fall into the Gnostic trap of dis severing body and soul, since the Church’s final resurrection by the Spirit to an incorruptible body is as central to her justification as it was for Christ. The Irenaean challenge is always to keep Christ centre-stage in the project. The incorruptible body cannot guarantee heavenly existence, as is often claimed, since the resurrected Christ will return to earth. Nor is the project one of restoring original righteousness, since this would be to lose Christ’s paradigmatic journey from ψυχικός to πνευματικός. Irenaeus reminds us instead that the project moves from man of dust to Man of heaven, disclosing Genesis 1:26 not only as an event in the past, but more importantly as the Divinely-intended goal of the future. Only the spiritual body, secured in the ministry of Christ, can guarantee the eternal communion of flesh and Spirit.

⁷⁷ 5.6.1, p531.

⁷⁸ 4.38.3, p521, 5.36.3.

CHAPTER 8: 'THE INDWELLING OF GOD'

The man who loves God shall arrive at such excellency as even to see God, and hear His word, and from the hearing of His discourse be glorified to such an extent, that others cannot behold the glory of his countenance. (4.26.1) *

Having explored in the course of our study the sheer breadth of Irenaeus' theological vision, we can now appreciate the cosmic project as a Divinely intended journey from protology to eschatology, from creation to redemption, from garden to city, from Adam to Christ. This rich perspective could not contrast more sharply with Gnosticism's propensity to segregate and thereby eradicate all purpose to the earthly handiwork of God; the Gnostic yearns always to flee rather than settle in a material creation, for corporeal existence is inherently unredeemable. Lyon's bishop however sees no such spatial dualism; the project leads not from 'here' to 'there', from lowly earth to lofty heaven. Scripture's trajectory is not essentially one of spatial relocation, but of a promised *temporal* transition from one age to another, not the dialectic of 'here to there' but 'now to then'. For with the coming of the new age in the παρουσία of the last Adam, the present heaven and earth will pass away and distinctions between seen and unseen will be overcome, as the ἀρχή and τέλος of creation refashions His handiwork into a new heaven and new earth, the promised city of foundations, the true dwelling of God with men.¹ The project awaits not the *abandonment* of earthly existence nor the prolongation of present distinctions between earth and heaven, but a transformation of seen and unseen, spiritual and material, already secured when the resurrected Christ passed from ψυχικός to πνευματικός life. To believe in the new heavens and earth is to believe in the miracle of cosmic resurrection.

A Renewed Creation

It would be wrong of course to claim that Gnosticism sees no purpose in bodily life. Present existence after all is mandatory for perfecting the spiritual seed before its liberation. Human history however is invariably cheated of its meaning, because corporeal existence remains an undesirable abode. It is true the world becomes necessary for the dispensation of salvation, but the world itself enjoys no hope.² Events within creation have no *permanent* meaning. Irenaeus we know sees inherent contradictions in this dysfunctional Gnostic outlook. For if this present order is the image of things above, as Gnostics often claim, then surely this earthly copy below should *perpetually* mirror the heavenly world, lest the echo of spiritual reality proves woefully impermanent. Even within Gnostic thought, the earth's imitation of the heavens would imply

¹ Hebrews 11:10,16, 13:14, Revelation 21:2-3.

² Firolamo: *Gnosticism*, p132-3.

corporeal continuance.³ How much more is corporeal existence central to *Christian* eschatology, in the light of Christ's bodily resurrection! There is then a double irony, whenever the Church espouses Gnostic-like theories of cosmic annihilation and promised *heavenly* bliss. Hydra-like tentacles seize contemporary conceptions of the future, whenever the hope of a renewed creation is replaced by the salvation of the soul for heaven, the result of conflating discarnate existence after death with bodily resurrection at the παρουσία. Here Moltmann's account of a post-nineteenth century 'Gnosticization' of Christian eschatology is peculiarly pertinent, as the hope of a liberated cosmos was lost in the desire to escape the body,⁴

The prayer for the coming of the Kingdom 'on earth as it is in heaven' was replaced by the longing 'to go to heaven' oneself. The Kingdom of God's glory and the salvation of the whole creation was reduced to heaven; and heaven was reduced to the salvation of the soul.⁴

Irenaeus unmasks the vacuity of a trend still prevalent today. Rather than interpret the future in radical discordance to the present, the bishop discerns the biblical distinction between creation's 'form' and 'substance'. It is the 'form' of the earth, the σχῆμα of this creation that will pass away (1Corinthians 7:31). Like a worn-out garment, this present 'fashion' must be changed, a first order giving rise to another, that God's salvation might endure forever.⁵ What Irenaeus understands so clearly, is how in the final analysis all conceptions of *annihilatio mundi*, casting aside not only form and fashion but also essence and substance, actually *oppose* the faithfulness of God, since they require the implicit abandonment of creation. He therefore maintains,

Neither is the substance nor the essence of creation annihilated (for faithful and true is He who has established it), but 'the *fashion* of the world passeth away;' that is, those things among which transgression has occurred, since man has grown old in them.⁶

The substance of creation is not annihilated, *for faithful and true is He who established it*. Otherwise Genesis 1 becomes an incomplete aborted Gnostic effusion. Rather, the goodness of the Divine purpose is disclosed not in the world's *obliteration*, but in the termination of the sinful age conditioned by psychic Adam. The Divine purpose will accomplish the new heaven and earth, fulfilling the original creative intent,

When this [present] fashion [of things] passes away, and man has been renewed, and flourishes in an incorruptible state, so as to preclude the possibility of becoming old, [then] there shall be the new heaven and the new earth, in which the new man shall remain [continually], always holding fresh converse with God.⁷

³ 2.7.1, p366.

⁴ Moltmann: *Creation*, p181.

⁵ 1 Corinthians 7:31, Psalm 102:25-8, Isaiah 51:6, 4.3.1.

⁶ 5.36.1, p566.

⁷ 5.36.1, p566-7.

The aim is not to bring the cosmos to naught, but to perfection. Awaiting its freedom from all bondage to corruption and every form of alienation, creation knows a day when the 'whole world will be filled with fruit',⁸ and a renewed cosmos will become the Father's promised inheritance to Christ's resurrected people. The vision avoids the contemporary inclination to cosmic destruction and a distant heavenly hope. It is not to deny the hope is beyond comprehension, since not even angels can fathom this wisdom of God, 'by means of which His handiwork, confirmed and incorporated with His Son, is brought to perfection',⁹ when the new Jerusalem descends from heaven as the eschatological tabernacle of God, His eternal dwelling with men.¹⁰ The Son's millennial Kingdom acts as earthly image of that day, preparing the maturing Church for the coming Kingdom of the Father, the new heavens and earth. It is a hope of transformation, where embodiment marks the redemptive end of all God's works.¹¹ Only then, when sin rather than matter is eradicated from the age to come, will creation enjoy its redemption by way of the Son's incarnate ministry from virgin womb to empty grave, 'the victory of Christ...over a demonised creation...that it too may reveal and praise its Creator'.¹²

In fact to dissolve the connections between Christ, Adam's children and the cosmos is to stray, albeit unintentionally, towards a Gnostic outlook which unhinges the human creation from the rest of God's handiwork. It is to forget that Scripture's anthropological hope 'is resoundingly this-worldly',¹³ anchored in the testimony to the *interdependence* of man and his environment. We have seen how the early chapters of Genesis regularly expound this point. Through disobedience 'Adam' (אָדָם) formed from the 'ground' (אֲדָמָה) brings curse upon that ground, to return in death to the ground. Abel's spilt blood cries out to the Lord from the ground. The ground cannot endure the sins of Israel forever.¹⁴ This interdependence of man and cosmos is modelled in the Son, who assuming the first order of creation through incarnation brings to death the first heaven and earth at His crucifixion, before His body is transformed through resurrection to the life of new creation. Once the tabernacle-temple is understood as model of the cosmos, the tearing of the temple veil at Jesus' death marks the end not only of the temple but of the first order, the passing away of heaven and earth.¹⁵ As the Son assumes creation in the virgin's womb, the old order ends at His cross, the new order begins at His resurrection, that Christ might be the Model of cosmic transformation. O'Donovan is right to say that,

⁸ 4.4.1 [Isaiah 27:6], p466.

⁹ 5.36.3, p567.

¹⁰ 5.35.2 [Revelation 21:1-4, Isaiah 65:17-18, 1 Corinthians 7:31, Matthew 24:35].

¹¹ Moltmann: *Creation*, p90, 245-6. So Gregory of Nazianzus can say at his brother's funeral, 'why am I faint-hearted in my hopes? Why behave like a mere creature of a day? I await the voice of the Archangel, the last trumpet, the transformation of the heavens, the transfiguration of the earth, the liberation of the elements, the renovation of the universe', *Orations* 7.21, p237, in *NPNF*, 2nd series, vol VII, ed Schaff/Wace, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974.

¹² MacKenzie: *Irenaeus*, p91, Gunton: *Atonement*, p80.

¹³ Cooper: *Body*, p37, 80.

¹⁴ Genesis 2:7, 3:17-19, 4:10, Deuteronomy 21:23, 28:21, 63.

¹⁵ The tabernacle after all is a mini-model of the first order: Exodus 25:9,40, 26:30, Hebrews 8:5. See C.Fletcher-Louis: 'The Destruction of the Temple and the Relativization of the Old Covenant' in Brower: *The Reader*, p164-9.

In proclaiming the resurrection of Christ, the apostles proclaimed also the resurrection of mankind in Christ; and in proclaiming the resurrection of mankind, they proclaimed the renewal of all creation with him.¹⁶

It is this essential correlation between ‘Adam’ and ‘adamah’, person and environment, mode and location of existence, which sees the outpoured Spirit both transform our lowly bodies *and* irrigate a fruitful earth at the regeneration of all things, witnessed in Paul’s consummate vision of Romans 8:18-23, ‘the liberation and renewal, not the destruction and re-creation *ex nihilo*, of the universe’.¹⁷ This is the Christ-effected union of individual and cosmic, where bodily resurrection of the sons of God parallels a creation delivered from its subjection to first Adam; our investiture with new bodies accompanies a cosmic transformation. Cooper captures the incongruity of disjoining the two, ‘indeed, where would we be with new bodies if the new heaven and earth were not yet a reality? We would be all dressed up with no place to go’.¹⁸ Cullmann too develops the point,

Because resurrection of the body is a new act of creation which embraces everything, it is not an event which begins with each individual death, but only at the End. It is not a transition from this world to another world, as is the case of the immortal soul freed from the body, rather it is the transition from the present age to the future. It is tied to the whole process of redemption.¹⁹

As for the resurrected Christ so for the future cosmos, transformation brings death of the ‘form’ but preservation of the ‘substance’. So in 2Peter 3’s description of final judgement, it is this subtle distinction between form and substance which leaves the *elements* of this first age consumed (στοιχεῖα in v10, 12),²⁰ with the works of God *disclosed* (εὐρεθήσεται). Moreover the language of ‘dissolution’ means not nihilistic destruction, since ἀπόλλυμι (v6) describes a cataclysmic flood, which brought in turn a ‘new’ creation from the dredges of the old, and a new Adamic figure in Noah. Wolters can rightly say,

The day of the Lord will bring the fires of judgment and a cataclysmic convulsion of all creation, but what emerges from the crucible will be ‘a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness’ (v13), and it is presumably there that ‘the earth and the works that are upon it will be found,’ now purified from the filth and perversion of sin.²¹

Or in the words of the Revelation, death, sorrow, crying and pain will be no more [ὅτι] τὰ πρῶτα ἀπῆλθαν. (Revelation 21:4). The future of Adam’s children and the cosmos are inextricably intertwined. Their shared transformation is anchored in the cross and resurrection of the incarnate Christ.

¹⁶ O’Donovan: *Resurrection*, p31.

¹⁷ Ferguson: *Holy Spirit*, p249, 254.

¹⁸ Cooper: *Body*, p154.

¹⁹ Cullmann: *Immortality*, p38.

²⁰ Στοιχεῖα also appears in Galatians 4:3,9, Colossians 2:8,20.

²¹ Wolters: *Creation*, p41.

This mature Irenaeian eschatology unmask the incongruities of some alternative perspectives. In particular we might mention the eschatological dualism prevalent in the likes of Augustine, whenever he describes this world over against the next, 'rather than seeking a realisation of the next in the materiality of the present'.²² The City of God set in timeless reality against the earthly city conveys more the Platonic opposition of time and eternity than the biblical perspective of a renewed creation, introducing an unnecessary discontinuity of existence. A truer picture emerges in the words of Schep, 'while eternity may imply a *mode* of existence different from that of this age, it is certainly an existence *in* time, in *infinite* time, to be regarded as a succession of moments'.²³ The inevitable Augustinian consequence is to place human salvation apart from the rest of the created order. The city belongs on high, 'eternally immortal in heaven',²⁴ its time and space co-ordinates the very antithesis of our experience, fuelling in turn a pilgrimage motif where the redeemed yearns not for a coming age but for another place; 'so long as he is in this mortal body, he is a pilgrim in a foreign land, away from God'.²⁵ Calvin at times shares the picture, whenever contempt for this present earthly life springs from the conviction that the future belongs *somewhere else*; 'for if heaven is our homeland, what else is the earth but our place of exile?...If to be freed from the body is to be released into perfect freedom, what else is the body but a prison?'²⁶ Such words confuse life after death (the present heavenly state for righteous souls) and life after the *παρουσία* (the future establishment of the new heavens and earth).

Yet it would be unfair to leave Augustine squarely in the dualistic camp. Much wheat grows among the tares. For elsewhere the African bishop also draws the Irenaeian distinction between form and substance, acknowledging that a renewed creation (rather than a distant heaven) follows the final judgement of Revelation 20:11,

After the judgement has been accomplished this heaven and this earth will, of course, cease to be, when a new heaven and a new earth will come into being. For it is by a transformation of the physical universe, not by its annihilation, that this world will pass away...It is, then, the outward form, not the substance, that passes.²⁷

What is more, Augustine parallels the renewal of all things with the transformation of our own bodies into Christ's body of glory,

Thus in that blazing up of the fire of the world, the qualities of the corruptible elements which were appropriate for our corruptible bodies will utterly perish in the burning, and our substance itself will acquire the qualities which will be suited, by a miraculous transformation, to our immortal bodies, with the obvious purpose of furnishing the world,

²² Gunton: *Trinitarian Theology*, p50, 171-4.

²³ Schep: *Resurrection Body*, p215.

²⁴ Augustine: *City*, Bk 11.28, p463, 5.16, 15.20.

²⁵ Augustine: Bk 19.14, p873.

²⁶ Calvin: *Institutes*, Bk 3.9.4, p716.

²⁷ Augustine: *City*, Bk 20.14, p925.

now renewed for the better, with a fitting population of human beings, renewed for the better even in their flesh.²⁸

A dualistic trend of course is not the only eschatological confusion. Reductionist readings of texts threaten to discount the future cosmos altogether, as when Reumann claims that Isaiah's language of new creation refers *only* to a transformed post-exilic Israel and the restoration of Jerusalem, thus reducing even the imagery of Revelation 21-2 to the promised protection of a redeemed community.²⁹ Reumann's future hope is horribly truncated, conveyed by the words,

There may have been moments of ecstasy when apocalyptists or enthusiasts talked of the whole universe from a vision of faith; but their rhetoric is consistently toned down as the Bible explicates the new heavens and the earth, the new creation as the redeemed community.³⁰

This view in fact falls into a similar dualist trap, with its indiscriminate division between $\alpha\gamma\alpha$ and $\alpha\gamma\alpha$, failing to see that biblical redemption *must* secure the freedom of creation from its subjection to futility, lest Adam's injurious work be left undone. The outlook echoes the tenets of Gnostic faith. It is truer to say with Strimple that the Romans 4:13 promise of inheritance, though couched in pre-messianic terms as the land of Canaan, is subsequently interpreted through later prophets and apostles as the promised new creation.³¹ Moreover a similar reductionism prevails whenever the new heavens and earth 'become mere metaphors for the static ontological structures which surround our enjoyment of the beatific vision',³² as with Aquinas' essentially Ptolemaic understanding of God as unmoved Mover, or Harris' portrayal of a motionless future that 'inaugurates the beatific vision of Christ'.³³ Such misconceptions confuse once more the soul's salvation in heaven with the final regeneration of all things, the time of paradisaal fellowship with the $\alpha\lambda\iota\gamma\gamma\epsilon\nu\epsilon\sigma\iota\alpha$.

Furthermore we have observed the inadequacies of an eschatology that purposes creation's return only to its *original* integrity, a universe restored to its pristine state. For all its affirmation of corporeal existence, such a view closely imitates Origen's reintegration and return, where the material world exists without its own *maturing* destiny, 'an eschatology more consistent with Platonism than the new heaven and new earth of the Bible'.³⁴ It is in practice an emanationist philosophy, where the end returns to the beginning, and creation 'with no truly eschatological teleology',³⁵ is rolled back into God. Osborn at times appears to read Irenaeus

²⁸ Augustine: Bk 20.16, p927.

²⁹ Reumann mentions Isaiah 45:8, 65:17-25, 66:22 as examples, with Revelation 21 repeating Isaiah's language (Revelation 21:1 recalls Isaiah 65:17, 66:22, v2 recalls Isaiah 52:1, 61:10, v4 recalls Isaiah 25:8, 35:10, 51:11, 65:19-20, v5 recalls Isaiah 60:19), cf *Creation*, p78-81, 87-91.

³⁰ Reumann: *Creation*, p101.

³¹ R.B.Strimple: 'Amillennialism', in *Three Views*, ed D.Bock, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999, p84-100 [p90-1].

³² Doyle: *Eschatology*, p141-2.

³³ Harris: *Resurrection*, p161.

³⁴ J.W.Trigg: *Origen. The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church*, Atlanta: Knox: 1983, p110.

³⁵ Gunton: 'The End of Causality? The Reformers and their Predecessors' in ed Gunton: *Doctrine of Creation*, p63-82 [p81].

through this lens, 'redemption is at the same time *a restoration* to perfection in Christ'.³⁶ Similarly, though Wolters maintains redemption is re-creation, ensuring that grace is not 'supra-creational' (where a sacred realm permeates above an original world), it cannot suffice to say that 'the whole point of salvation is...to salvage a sin-disrupted creation',³⁷ since this merely returns creation to former innocence, rather than facilitating its progress to future glory. It is to hanker after the past, not strive towards the future. Salvation is reduced to a requisite though temporary structure,

In a very significant sense this restoration means that salvation does not bring anything new...but *like scaffolding attached to a house being renovated, or bandages covering a wound*, these are all incidental to the main purpose, meant only to serve the process of restoration.³⁸

In an outlook that knows no transformation of nature, redemption means only restoration, as eschatology collapses into protology, τέλος into ἀρχή,

At bottom, the only thing redemption adds that is not included in the creation is the remedy for sin, and that remedy is brought in solely for the purpose of recovering a sinless creation. To put it in the traditional language of theology, grace does not bring a *donum superadditum* to nature, a gift added on top of creation; rather, grace *restores* nature, making it whole once more.³⁹

Such theology, for all its insistence upon an integrated project, loses sight of the *intended* advancement of creation so pivotal to Irenaeus, advancement from man of dust to Man of heaven, from Adam to Christ, from breath to Spirit, from 'very good' to the 'perfect' life of resurrection. The cosmos is not replaced but renewed, its 'fashion' passes away its 'substance' remains, as the order of life changes from ψυχικός to πνευματικός. What the bishop makes clear is that lesser eschatologies always risk swimming into Gnostic waters, whether they advocate total destruction, conflate present heaven with future new heavens and earth, reduce the new creation to the promise of the redeemed, or conceive only of restoration. Perhaps more than this, they implicitly cast into doubt the faithfulness of the triune God to His original handiwork. And if the Lord is not faithful to His creation, how can we trust Him for salvation?

The Rule of Son and Father

It is striking how the apostle Paul under-girds his eschatological treatise in 1Corinthians 15 with an affirmation that Christ accomplishes the words of Psalm 110:1, when He the High Priest and King is invited by His Father to exercise a rule bringing all His enemies, including death, to

³⁶ Osborn: 'Love of Enemies and Recapitulation', p30.

³⁷ Wolters: *Creation*, p11.

³⁸ Italics mine, Wolters: *Creation*, p58-9.

³⁹ As above.

subjection under His feet. But it is not the Son of God alone welcomed to the seat of universal authority but also the Son of Man, who in the light of Psalm 8:6-8 accomplishes *Adam's* calling to rule the earth in obedient love for the Father. In this Word *made flesh* now raised to glory we see the proper dominion of Man over creation, now there is no power, not even death itself, to defy His rule. Genesis 1:28 finds its fullest meaning in the exalted Christ, as indicated by Wolff, that 'through the Sovereignty of the One who was crucified, mankind's stewardship over the world is snatched back from self-destruction, and the image of God once more emerges in all its freedom'.⁴⁰ At His παρουσία all enemies rallied against the Divine purpose will be manifestly subject, before Christ delivers the Kingdom to His Father (1Corinthians 15:24). The last enemy to be destroyed is death, the present passive καταργεῖται (v26) not implying its progressive defeat in the millennial Kingdom, but rather death's anticipated destruction in the full harvest of resurrection, once the sons of God receive their glorious spiritual bodies. For the Father delights to subject all things under the feet of His Son, in a rule consummated at His return.⁴¹

Psalm 110 is not alone in describing the High Priest-King's exercise of God's eternal rule. Irenaeus also mentions Daniel 2:44-5, where Christ the stone cut without human hands will 'destroy temporal kingdoms, and introduce an eternal one...the resurrection of the just',⁴² that is the promised perfecting of creation. And our eschatological assurance demands His impeccable holiness, both in the past and for the future. Now through resurrection-ascension He reconciles earth and heaven, seen and unseen, advancing a cosmic renewal whereby heavenly and earthly become inextricably one in His own resurrection body. Surmounting the distinctions within the first creation, He secures the project's advancement, where the fusion of celestial and terrestrial sees the dwelling of God coming *down* to men (Revelation 21-2).⁴³ Moltmann captures the Irenaean logic,

If we wish to relate heaven and earth to God in a Trinitarian sense...we should have to say that *heaven* is the chosen dwelling place of *the Father*, but the chosen dwelling of *the Son* is the earth, on which He became a human being, died and rose again, and where He will come in order to fill it with His glory. But then the chosen place of *the Holy Spirit* must be seen in the coming direct bond between heaven and earth in the new creation, as whose energy the Holy Spirit already manifests Himself now, in the present.⁴⁴

By raising the Son, the Father secures the paradigm of new creation in the power of the Spirit. And at the regeneration of all things God will most fully dwell with men, as the ἀνακεφαλαιώσις secured in Christ brings the accomplished union of heaven and earth, that Christ the Lord of creation, through whom the cosmos was made, in whom it coheres and to whom it moves,

⁴⁰ Wolff: *Anthropology*, p165.

⁴¹ 1 Corinthians 15:27, Psalm 8:6-8, Hebrews 2:7-8.

⁴² 5.26.2, p555.

⁴³ In the background of Revelation 21-2 are echoes of earlier passages: Genesis 2:10, 1 Kings 6:19-20, Isaiah 60:19-20, 65:17-19, 66:22-3, Ezekiel 47:1-12, 48:30-4.

⁴⁴ Moltmann: *Creation*, p162.

might disclose the fullness of God. 'Then there shall be the new heaven and the new earth, in which the new man shall remain [continually], always holding fresh converse with God'.⁴⁵

To see the cosmos move to Christ however is not to deny the triune relations which prompt the Son to deliver His Kingdom to the Father, that God might be all in all (1Corinthians 15:24, 28). For if the Father subjects all things to His Son in accordance with the Psalmic promise, the Son will freely subject Himself to the Father. The Father is confirmed as the Head of Christ (1Corinthians 11:3), and Christ confirmed as the true Adam, who exercises cosmic dominion to the praise of His God. So Barrett may say, 'in the obedient service of the representative man Jesus Christ, man's dominion is being restored, but its security lies only in the unvarying submission of Jesus the Son to His Father'.⁴⁶ This eschatological act completes the Son's obedience, as the Divine rule given to the Son through resurrection is transferred to the Father at the consummation. Irenaeus understands the Son's deliverance of the Kingdom as the final expression of His Adamic calling, enabling Moltmann to say that 'it is only in the eschatological transfer of the divine rule to the Father that the Son completes his obedience and his sonship'.⁴⁷ Then, when Christ submits both Himself and the Kingdom to God, will the Father's fullness fill the entire universe, 'and when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all'.⁴⁸ The act of 'delivering' the Kingdom (παράδωκεν v24) discloses above all else the Father-Son relationship. It describes no eschatological 'change' in the Son, erroneously conceived amongst others by Calvin, whose dualist reading of 1Corinthians 15:24-8 transfers Christ's Kingdom from His humanity to His glorious Divinity. A Eutychian drift implies the human Son yields to the Father only for a time (the subordinationist language is applied only to earthly humiliation), before recommencing the rule that was His at creation, 'then God shall cease to be the Head of Christ'.⁴⁹ It would appear the Western preference for *substantia* over *persona* so colours Calvin's outlook, that the 'Father' in 15:28 is reinterpreted as the Divine essence common to the Son, as if Christ's transferral to Divine life challenges both His permanence as Son of Adam and the uniqueness of the Father-Son relationship. The text however speaks not of the human-Divine relation in Christ, but of the mutual honouring of Father and Son by the Spirit at the Eschaton.

For Irenaeus then this final act announces the primacy of the Father within the Godhead. In the perfecting power of the Spirit, the Son offers the Father a reconciled and matured creation, that the dwelling of God might be fully with Adam's children. On that Day the Son's subjection to the Father (ὑποτάσσω: v28) will be universally known, even as all things will be subject to the

⁴⁵ 5.36.1, p566-7.

⁴⁶ Barrett: *1Corinthians*, p361.

⁴⁷ J.Moltmann: *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993, p92.

⁴⁸ 5.36.2, p567 [1 Corinthians 15:24-8], Sauter: *What Dare We Hope?* p217.

⁴⁹ Calvin: *Institutes* 2.14.3, p485, 1.13.26, *Corinthians vol 2*, p32-3. See also Farrow: *Ascension*, p178.

Son.⁵⁰ This is the Trinitarian pattern, as the redeemed 'ascend through the Spirit to the Son, and through the Son to the Father...that in due time the Son will yield up His work to the Father'.⁵¹ The final Day discloses an *extended* pattern of relations, as the bishop affirms,

The Father is indeed above all, and He is the Head of Christ; but the Word is through all things, and is Himself the Head of the Church; while the Spirit is in us all, and He is the living water, which the Lord grants to those who rightly believe in Him, and love Him.⁵²

In fact the emerging Trinitarian pattern finds even *chronological* expression in Irenaeus, where the millennial Kingdom ruled by Christ preludes the regeneration of all things, in a time when the Son prepares creation for the Father's rule. In the words of the *Demonstration*,

Regeneration unto God the Father through His Son by the Holy Spirit: for those who bear the Spirit of God are led to the Word, that is to the Son, *while the Son presents [them] to the Father, and the Father furnishes...incorruptibility*. Thus, without the Spirit it is not [possible] to see the Word of God, and without the Son one is not able to approach the Father; for the knowledge of the Father [is] the Son, and knowledge of the Son of God is through the Holy Spirit.⁵³

God is seen of old through the Spirit prophetically, through the Son adoptively and will be seen in the Kingdom paternally, 'the Spirit preparing man to be a son of God, the Son leading him to the Father, and the Father bestowing incorruption unto eternal life'.⁵⁴ This is not to accuse Irenaeus of a dispensational Sabellianism. On the contrary, it is the Father who is *always* revealed, though only gradually and progressively, until the project's consummation. For it is always the Father who wills and acts, through the Son and by the Spirit, to fulfil His purpose of finally indwelling the Kingdom. As with any other doctrine, eschatology is *Trinitarianly* conceived.

For those ready to accuse Irenaeus of propounding an oppressive 'undemocratic' doctrine of the Trinity, the bishop makes clear that the Father who enjoys primacy in the triune life is no oppressive monarch, for He always seeks the honour of His begotten One. It is He who 'had from the beginning prepared the marriage for His Son',⁵⁵ calling those of former dispensation by the prophets to the wedding-feast, before calling the nations from all highways and byways. Similarly, it is the Father who subjects all things to the Son when He raised Him from death. If the Father is source of the triune life, it is as One who honours, vindicates and loves His Son; even as the Son supremely honours the Father at the end of all things (1Corinthians 15:24).

⁵⁰ ὑποτάσσω expresses distinct order in relations, as in Luke 2:51, Romans 13:1,5, 1 Corinthians 14:34, Ephesians 5:24, Colossians 3:18 Titus 2:5,9, 3:1, 1 Peter 2:13,18, 3:1,5, 5:5. Certainly the use of ὑποτάσσω in the husband-wife context illustrates the relation of Father to Son, where the Father is the Head of His 'Other', Christ, even as the husband is the head of his 'other', his wife (1 Corinthians 11:3).

⁵¹ 5.36.2, p567.

⁵² 5.18.2, p546.

⁵³ Italics mine, *Demonstration* §7, p44.

⁵⁴ Prestige: *Patristic Thought*, p92, 4.20.5.

⁵⁵ 4.36.5 [Matthew 22:1-14], p516.

When the Son hands the Kingdom to the Father, the transition from Kingdom of Christ to Kingdom of God will be complete. Then God will be 'all in all', as the unseen Father makes Himself fully known. Expressed by Doyle, 'the significance of the subordination of the Son to the Father and the transference of the kingdom to the Father lies ultimately in the "consummation of the Fatherhood of the Father"'.⁵⁶ Such expectation does not substantiate an Origen-like universalism, since in the final analysis it is the promise of universal *subjection* not salvation.⁵⁷ Then the rule of Christ will find its end, as the Son fulfilling Genesis 1:28's Adamic imperative delivers the Kingdom to the Father, that the dwelling of God might be wholly with Adam's children. On that day, when present distinctions are no more and the new heavens and earth are firmly established, the incarnate Son's recapitulative work will be complete.⁵⁸ Yet even then the Word made flesh will always be the Lamb slain ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου.⁵⁹

Sabbath-Rest

At the renewal of all creation, the Son delivering the Kingdom effects the promised Sabbath-rest. Then the delight of the Creator on the first feast of creation (Genesis 2:1-3) will find fullness in the eternal seventh day. The redemption patterned in the first order will bear its promised fruit. In the terms of Ezekiel the prophet, the Lord's holy Presence will be among people, the Divine Shepherd-King (Ezekiel 34) renewing the land and His people (chaps 35-7), defending them from all enemies (chaps 38-9), dwelling with His own (chaps 40-6), and healing the land (chaps 47-8).⁶⁰ In the light of this never-ending seventh day, the weekly gift of Israel's sabbath acts as 'the sign which celebrates the completeness of creation...the fulfilment of history',⁶¹ the arrival of a future age when the Lord will rest *in* His works. For every sabbath proclaims God as the great Liberator, as remarked upon by Wolff, 'even in the Old Testament...the Sabbath becomes an eschatological event in the midst of man's provisional world'.⁶² And if the sabbath casts our gaze towards redemption, it is a hope completed in the resurrection, as the incarnate Christ secures what Moltmann calls 'the Messianic fulfilment of the Israelite "dream of completion"'.⁶³ It is this journey from the dawn of the seventh day to the eternal consummation, that witnesses above all to a God intent on making His dwelling among people. In Irenaean terms, this long-suffering God determines man's progressive growth,

⁵⁶ Doyle: *Eschatology*, p33, Moltmann: *The Crucified God*, Minneapolis: Fortress 1993, p266.

⁵⁷ Origen advocates universalism, for example in *De Principiis* Bk 1.6.2.

⁵⁸ Cullmann: *Christ and Time*, p108-9, 151, 195, 208, Wingren: *Incarnation*, p183.

⁵⁹ Revelation 5:6,12, 13:8.

⁶⁰ D.Bock 'Gog and Magog in Ezekiel's Eschatological Vision' in ed Brower: *The Reader*, p85-116 [p91].

⁶¹ O'Donovan: *Resurrection*, p61.

⁶² Wolff: *Anthropology*, p142.

⁶³ Deuteronomy 5:15, Matthew 28:1, Moltmann: *God in Creation*, p292.

This, therefore, was the [object of the] long-suffering of God, that man, passing through all things, and acquiring the knowledge of moral discipline, then attaining to the resurrection from the dead, and learning by experience what is the source of his deliverance, may always live in a state of gratitude to the Lord, having obtained from Him the gift of incorruptibility, that he might love Him the more.⁶⁴

The awaited Rest promises a life of cheerful community in enduring praise of God, as the new heavens and earth becomes 'the banqueting hall for the eternal Sabbath'.⁶⁵ Irenaeus recalls the Bridegroom's joyful scene, a marriage-supper for those invested with the wedding-garment of the Spirit,

Those who do believe in Him through the preaching of His apostles throughout the east and west shall recline with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, partaking with them of the [heavenly] banquet.⁶⁶

The awaited sabbath thus denotes a future of everlasting praise, dedicated service and precious communal existence enjoyed in a perfected creation, as the redeemed revel in glad relationship with one-another, freely serving God and neighbour. Augustine speaks in similar vein, 'the earthly city glories in itself, the Heavenly City glories in the Lord', as the renewed creation will be 'a Sabbath that has no evening...consecrated by the resurrection of Christ, foreshadowing the eternal rest not only of the spirit but of the body also', an experience of 'life...eternal for the enjoyment of God and of one's neighbour in God'.⁶⁷ Only then will God be all in all, His dwelling most intimately with humanity, as sower and reaper rest in the fruits of their labour.⁶⁸ Only then will true freedom be known in richest community. Irenaeus reminds the Church that eternal life is at its heart an experience of *relationship*, since it is rooted in a God who is triune. Harris says,

The New Testament knows nothing of a neo-Platonic immortality of 'the Alone with the Alone'. Resurrection does not mark receipt of a beatific or contemplative vision in which the individual believer dwells in fellowship with Christ but in isolation from fellow-worshippers.⁶⁹

Indeed it is the promised resurrection *body* that permits real and enduring relationship to God and neighbour. There is no estrangement from fellow believers. The future brings communal corporeal existence, where the perfecting of the redeemed in resurrection life parallels the perfecting of creation. Hoekema may say,

In the end the future of humanity and...of the universe will come together. On the new earth all of creation will be totally and eternally free from all the results of sin and...of the

⁶⁴ 3.20.2, p450.

⁶⁵ Moltmann: *Creation*, p189.

⁶⁶ 4.36.8, p518 [Matthew 8:11-12], 4.36.6, p517 [Matthew 22:1-14].

⁶⁷ Augustine: *City*, Bk 14.28 p428, 22.30 p1090, 19:13, p872.

⁶⁸ 4.25.3 [John 4:37, 1 Corinthians 3:7].

⁶⁹ Harris: *Resurrection*, p233.

curse, when it will share with all the sons and daughters of God the magnificent freedom that will then be theirs!⁷⁰

It is as the renewed heavens and earth becomes the Father's dwelling that 'both...spheres of creation will enter into unhindered and boundlessly fruitful communication with one another'.⁷¹ Then the perfected creation, not dis severed from its past, will preserve the riches of the old earth, as the glories of the nations are received into the City (Revelation 21:24-6). Hoekema draws attention to this favoured Irenaean theme, 'these intriguing words suggest that the unique contributions of every nation to the life of the present earth will in some way enrich life on the new earth'.⁷² Sabbath rest means not inactivity, but a life continually maturing in joyful service of God and neighbour.

Neither will life in the new creation assume uniformity. As deeds of those who die in the Lord 'follow' them (Revelation 14:13), there will be proportions of blessing to eternal existence. Echoing the apostle's strivings to win the crown of life (1Corinthians 9:24-7), Irenaeus avows that 'if we have prized it more, we shall be the more glorious in the presence of God'.⁷³ All will know the Saviour, though different degrees of blessing follow service in this life. It would seem this is not exclusively Irenaean teaching,

As the presbyters say, then those who are deemed worthy of an abode in heaven shall go there, others shall enjoy the delights of paradise, and others shall possess the splendour of the city; for everywhere the Saviour shall be seen according as they who see Him shall be worthy.⁷⁴

Certainly Augustine boasts grades of honour appropriate to earthly merit, a diverse glory that provokes no hint of envy between brothers, because of the eschatological impossibility of sinning.⁷⁵ That which is to come is always shaped by that which has been. Yet questions remain on whether such conceptions of life eternal leave the Church open to charges of Gnosticised gradation. The bishop's answer, as for final judgement, lies in the principle of *suitability*; 'for all things belong to God, who supplies all with a *suitable dwelling-place*; even as His Word says, that a share is allotted to all by the Father, according as each person is or shall be worthy'.⁷⁶ What is more, diverse blessing cannot impose eternal *stasis*; advancement always pervades the future hope.

Yet in spite of passages possibly implying distinctions within the new creation,⁷⁷ this subtle echoing of Gnosticism's threefold hierarchy risks threatening the biblical picture of a heavenly

⁷⁰ Hoekema: *God's Image*, p243.

⁷¹ Moltmann: *Creation*, p184.

⁷² Hoekema: *God's Image*, p202, 93-4.

⁷³ 4.37.7, p520.

⁷⁴ 5.36.1, p567.

⁷⁵ Eternity's *non posse peccare* rather than Adam's paradisaical *posse non peccare*, *City*, Bk 22.30 p1089.

⁷⁶ 5.36.2, p567.

⁷⁷ One might tentatively mention Luke 12:47-8, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15.

City *descending* to earth, that the dwelling of God might *here* be fully with people. The hope is endangered whenever conceived in terms of *ascent*, as for example when presbyters say,

There is this distinction between the habitation of those who produce an hundred-fold, and that of those who produce sixty-fold, and that of those who produce thirty-fold: for the first will be taken up into the heavens, the second will dwell in paradise, the last will inhabit the city.⁷⁸

Such language threatens the promise of consummation, where first order distinctions are overcome. A truer picture perhaps emerges in the words of Doyle,

When the Holy City comes down from heaven and the dwelling-place of God is amongst His people, at the time of the new heaven and the new earth, where is heaven? After the coming of this City...there is no more description of heaven, or earth, for at that time the distinction is abolished, God rules His people directly.⁷⁹

Though the Lord secures a *suitable* abode for His own (the deeds of the righteous accompanying His people), the renewed creation essentially seals the eternal marriage of earth and heaven. The Spirit-anointed Word, fashioned in the virgin's womb and perfected in resurrection, is the obedient Pattern of the heaven-earth project, securing the awesome promise that God will one day be 'all in all'.

It is then that the Church, now viewing a mirror darkly, will see Son and Father face to face. Though the Father is always 'seen', prophetically through the Spirit and adoptively through the Son, He shall then be seen in the Kingdom, since in Watson's Irenaeus-like words, 'it is clear that the Father is indeed visible'.⁸⁰ Incorruption will belong to all who see Him, in a new creation where no temple is required, 'for as those who see the light are within the light, and partake of its brilliancy; even so, those who see God are in God, and receive of His splendour'.⁸¹ To behold the Father is to be transformed into immortality. Not dissimilar from Paul's extraordinary words in Romans 8:28-30, Irenaeus presents his own irresistible golden chain,

Now it was necessary that man should in the first instance be created; and having been created, should receive growth; and having received growth, should be strengthened; and having been strengthened, should abound; and having abounded, should recover [from the disease of sin]; and having recovered, should be glorified; and being glorified, should see his Lord. For God is He who is yet to be seen, and the beholding of God is productive of immortality.⁸²

Neither should we think of such immortality as inactivity. The call to learning that is the mark of discipleship (μανθάνω-μαθητής) continues even in the new creation, as God forever teaches

⁷⁸ 5.36.2, p567.

⁷⁹ Doyle: *Eschatology*, p305.

⁸⁰ Watson: *Text*, p289, 4.20.5.

⁸¹ 4.20.5, p489, 4.20.6 [Revelation 21:22].

⁸² 4.38.3, p522.

and man forever learns, 'because He is good, and possesses boundless riches, a kingdom without end, and instruction that can never be exhausted'.⁸³ Eternal life after all is Spirit-given knowledge of the only true Father and Son (John 17:3). The joy of seeing both face to face brings not closure but evolution in the relationship, not schism but extension of earlier blessing, not development towards but development *in* fruition. So Irenaeus may say, 'we shall make *increase in the very same things* [as now], and shall make progress, so that no longer through a glass, or by means of enigmas, but face to face, we shall enjoy the gifts of God'.⁸⁴

To look upon the Lord will mean to find true joy. For seeing Him as He is, 'all the members shall burst out into a continuous hymn of triumph, glorifying Him who raised them from the dead, and gave the gift of eternal life'.⁸⁵ Yet the Irenaeian hope of seeing God is no quasi-*immaterial* beatific vision, implied for example whenever Augustine connects eschatological *visio*, the sweetness of contemplating the Divine, to the realm of timeless intellect.⁸⁶ The face of God is made to function *metaphorically*, 'we must take the "face" of God as meaning His revelation and not the part of the body such as we have and to which we give the name'.⁸⁷ An operative anthropological hierarchy reinterprets the promise of sight as the *soul's* perception of the Divine immaterial nature; 'in that new age the faith, by which we believe, will have a greater reality for us than the appearance of material things which we see with our bodily eyes'.⁸⁸ Augustine's conception of seeing God is very different from that of Irenaeus. Yet Gaul's bishop is sometimes read with Augustinian eyes, as when Osborn summates his eschatology in the following terms, 'degrees of participation in the divine splendour are degrees of participation in the divine vision and life',⁸⁹ or when Lawson defines Irenaeian perfection as merely 'to behold and rejoice in the Vision of God'.⁹⁰

The awaited Sabbath thus promises a future of diverse, manifold and never-ending riches. The eschatological hope means eternal praise and delight in our Creator-Redeemer, rejoicing in the goodness of human community, enjoying the fruits of our labours, ruling a fertile and productive creation, preserving the glories of the nations, and persevering ever joyfully towards maturity, free from all the entanglements of this fallen Adamic age, in ever-growing love for a God known face to face. These consummate blessings await the promised renewal of the cosmos, as the future is viewed in terms that purify, preserve, amplify and augment the many good things of this first age. Irenaeus thereby instructs a confused contemporary Church, which often neglects both the *corporeality* of the eschatological hope and the *continuity* between

⁸³ 2.28.3, p400.

⁸⁴ 4.9.2, p472, 4.13.4, Baillie: *Life Everlasting*, p234.

⁸⁵ 5.8.1, p533, 5.7.2.

⁸⁶ Augustine: *Confessions*, Bk 12.ix.9, *City*, Bk 7.31, 10.3.

⁸⁷ Augustine: *City*, Bk 22.29, p1082.

⁸⁸ *City*, Bk 22.29, p1086.

⁸⁹ Osborn: *Irenaeus*, p202.

⁹⁰ Lawson: *Irenaeus*, p285.

orders of creation. The faithfulness of God demands a connection. Creation cannot simply be annihilated, 'for faithful and true is He who has established it'.⁹¹

God and Man

The dynamism of Irenaeus theology is such that the future Sabbath-rest not only brings more intimate fellowship between God and man, it also achieves the Genesis 1:26 promise of Divine likeness, twisted by Satan in the Garden, but accomplished by the incarnate Christ according to the original intent. The Son of God became the Son of man, that we the sons of men might become the sons of God. Consequently Irenaeus interprets Psalm 82:6 as the Son speaking 'to those...who have received the grace of the "adoption, by which we cry, Abba Father"'.⁹² Receiving the only-begotten Son by believing on His Name, Adam's children become adopted sons of the Father in Him. Conversely those who deny the incorruptible Word, though likewise destined to be the sons of God (Psalm 82:6) shall die like mere men (Psalm 82:7), since rebuffing the Word made flesh means defrauding human nature of promotion into God,

It was for this end that the Word of God was made man, and He who was the Son of God became the Son of man, that man, having been taken into the Word, and receiving the adoption, might become the son of God.⁹³

This Irenaeus language of θεοποίησις is therefore rooted in the promise of adoption. Adopted by faith into the triune life, Adam's children are 'made' sons of God (θεο-ποιέω), as the Father receives them in the true Son. The promise is not a human right, but the gift of God. Sometimes the bishop's references to θεοποίησις are quite explicit, as in the Preface to Book 4, 'there is none other called God by the Scriptures except the Father of all, and the Son, *and those who possess the adoption*',⁹⁴ as well as the opening to Book 5, 'the Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who did, through His transcendent love, become what we are, *that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself*'.⁹⁵ The theme is developed on several occasions. 'Yet never is deification considered either an inescapable cosmic process (as in some branches of Eastern theology) or the abnegation of true humanness (as tends to be the Western charge).

Moreover deification, hardly a doctrine peculiar to Irenaeus, forms a broader strand of teaching within the Early Church. Athanasius for one would say, 'He was made man that we might be made God'.⁹⁶ In fact deification forms the premise for arguing the *essential* (rather than simply

⁹¹ 5.36.1, p566 [see p189, footnote 6].

⁹² 3.6.1, p419, 3.6.2, 3.10.2.

⁹³ 3.19.1 [Psalm 82:6-7], p448.

⁹⁴ 4.Preface.4, p463, italics mine.

⁹⁵ 5.Preface, p526, italics mine.

⁹⁶ Athanasius: *On Incarnation*, §54, p65.

the participative) Deity of the Son against the Arians, 'whence, if He was Himself too from participation, and not from the Father His essential Godhead and Image, He would not deify, being deified Himself'.⁹⁷ Whilst other theologians identify Christ so closely with His Church that 1Corinthians 15:28 is reinterpreted as inclusive of believers. So Kelly, commenting on Gregory of Nyssa, says

Since we are all by participation conjoined with Christ's unique body, we become one single body, viz. His. When we are all perfect and united with God, the whole body of Christ will then be subjected to the quickening power. The subjection of this body is called the subjection of the Son Himself for the reason that He is identified with His body, which is the Church.⁹⁸

Hilary speaks similarly, interpreting the same passage as the Church's subjection to the Father, since believers undergo the same transformation that occurred in the risen Christ. Thus the Godhead that is Christ's by right is communicated to His whole Body the Church, as 'He shall deliver the Kingdom to God the Father, not in the sense that He resigns His power by the delivering, but that we, being conformed to the glory of his body, shall form the Kingdom of God'.⁹⁹ Though this may be a dubious reading of the text, it is striking how deification is so freely argued.

This may also explain why Irenaeus does not so much contend for deification, as explore why precisely there is *delay* before its accomplishment. The question debated is not the τέλος but the timing. And the answer resides in the benevolent patience of God. Hence the bishop's extraordinary words,

For we cast blame upon Him, because we have not been made gods from the beginning, but at first merely men, then at length gods; although God has adopted this course out of His pure benevolence, that no-one may impute to Him invidiousness or grudgingness.¹⁰⁰

As encapsulated in Psalm 82:6-7, the Divine intent for θεοποίησις works in the midst of human weakness and frailty, requiring a patient and gradual realization to the project,

He declares, 'I have said, Ye are gods; and ye are all sons of the Highest.' But since we could not sustain the power of divinity, He adds, 'But ye shall die like men,' setting forth both truths – the kindness of His free gift, and our weakness, and also that we were possessed of power over ourselves.¹⁰¹

The cause of delay is not Divine reluctance but overwhelming grace. The process begins with created nature, before that nature is assumed by the eternal Son and engulfed in immortality

⁹⁷ Athanasius: *Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia*, Part III §51 p477-8, in *NPNF*, 2nd series, vol IV, ed Schaff/Wace, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975.

⁹⁸ Kelly: *Doctrines*, p404.

⁹⁹ Hilary of Poitiers: *On the Trinity*, Bk 11.39, p214, in *NPNF*, 2nd series, vol IX, ed Schaff/Wace, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976.

¹⁰⁰ 4.38.4, p522. For 'man is infinitely inferior to God...he has received grace only in part, and is not yet equal or similar to his Maker', 2.25.3, p396.

¹⁰¹ 4.38.4, p522.

when He is raised from death, that the children of Adam might ultimately be in the image and likeness of God. The project was always intended to comprise different stages,

How, then, shall he be a God, who has not as yet been made a man? Or how can he be perfect who was but lately created?...For it must be that thou, at the outset, shouldest hold the rank of a man, and then afterwards partake of the glory of God.¹⁰²

The calling is crystal-clear, but the process is by no means automatic (as for example in de Chardin's pantheist vision of humanity's absorption into God).¹⁰³ Rather, the perfecting of created man requires a response of ongoing obedience to Christ, promoting Irenaeus' heartfelt appeal to his readers, 'if, then, thou shalt deliver up to Him what is thine, that is, faith towards Him and subjection, thou shalt receive His handiwork, and shalt be a perfect work of God'.¹⁰⁴

We can therefore safely say that Irenaeus propounds eschatological deification, beyond MacKenzie's précis 'in which humanity's integrity as the handiwork of God is complete'.¹⁰⁵ Yet considering the heat of the broader debate, θεοποίησις must be nuanced carefully. We have explored the term as the hope of *adoption*, accomplishing the original intent of growth into the Divine Image. Adopted by the Father through His only-begotten Son, we ourselves are incorporated into that Father-Son relationship which characterises the triune life of God in the Spirit. Deification rightly describes the final dwelling of God with Adam's children. It should however be considered not the denial but the *perfecting* of humanity. Θεοποίησις is the reaping of a harvest sown at Christ's incarnation. There is no implicit negation of humanity. The primary distinction between Creator and created is not blurred, nor can it ever be. Moltmann echoes Irenaeus when he says, 'the Creator's distance from those He has created will be ended through His own indwelling in His creation; though the difference between Creator and creature will not disappear'.¹⁰⁶ Christ creates, man is created. Christ is always giving, man receiving. Man shares in the gift always by grace never by right, his receptivity and God's creativity coalescing in eternally fruitful communion. It is this act of receiving that constitutes humanity's call to ongoing maturity, both now and throughout the age to come,

In this respect God differs from man, that God indeed makes, but man is made; and truly, He who makes is always the same; but that which is made must receive both beginning, and middle, and addition, and increase...For as God is always the same, so also man, when found in God, shall always go on towards God.¹⁰⁷

Far from threatening the distinction between Creator and created, θεοποίησις conveys man's ongoing advancement in the riches of God, supremely by his conformity to Christ's resurrection body. It is never the eradication of man, as implied by such as Harnack and Bousset, who

¹⁰² 4.39.2, p523.

¹⁰³ De Chardin: *Future of Man*, p320-3.

¹⁰⁴ 4.39.2, p523.

¹⁰⁵ MacKenzie: *Irenaeus*, p76.

¹⁰⁶ Moltmann: *Creation*, p64.

¹⁰⁷ 4.11.2, p474.

interpret Irenaeus' θεοποίησις as a near-collapse into Gnostic anthropology.¹⁰⁸ For unlike the Gnostics, Irenaeus' conception is never at the expense of a perfected humanity. The bishop after all teaches us to view anthropology via Christology. Christ is the true Man, both eternally and as obedient Son of Adam. To be conformed to Him is to be truly human. And by acknowledging the ontological priority of 'person' rather than 'nature', we come to see both Deity and humanity in terms that are *relational*. In Zizioulas' words,

Theosis, as a way of describing this unity in personhood, is, therefore, just the opposite of a divinisation in which human nature ceases to be what it really is. Only if we lose the perspective of personhood and operate with 'nature' as such, such a misunderstanding of *theosis* can arise.¹⁰⁹

That is why to view deification as the denial of humanity is to risk operating an implicitly Nestorian Christology, as might be detected for example in the words of Alan Spence,

I would suggest that the practice, common in the earlier Christian tradition, of describing the goal of man as some form of divinisation is open to grave misinterpretation. Our destiny is not that we might be made divine but rather that we might at last become truly human.¹¹⁰

Certainly divinisation *is* open to grave misinterpretation. But Irenaeus confirms it need not mean the negation of all that pertains to true humanness. Deification after all is ψυχικός Adam (formed after the pattern of the Son) becoming πνευματικός, even as Christ the eternal Man becomes the resurrected One. Such existence is supremely the life of the Spirit, bringing to pass θεοποίησις as the promise of humanity's fullness.

Irenaeus' deification means adoption into the triune life. This is Adam's τέλος, not the abrogation but the affirmation of his creaturehood, the maturing of a relationship begun at his formation. In Bousset's words, 'Irenaeus speaks actually without embarrassment of the point that we men are to become Gods',¹¹¹ because deification and sonship are correlatives in the bishop's theology; the eternally-begotten Son of God secures the adoption of Adam's children, that they too might know His heavenly Father as adopted sons of God. The same truth is expressed in the words of Hebrews 2:13, Ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ καὶ τὰ παῖδιά ἃ μοι ἔδωκεν ὁ θεός. The promise is anchored in our union with the Son before the Father, as we share imperishability by entering into the life of the Trinity. The indwelling of the Son by the Spirit in believers patterns the mutual indwelling of Son and Spirit in the Godhead. And it is because the Spirit is internal to the Godhead that θεοποίησις can rightly be described as *perfected* life, eschatologically secured when the redeemed, through the resurrected Christ, receive their σῶμα πνευματικόν.

¹⁰⁸ Harnack: *History of Dogma*, vol 1-2 trans N.Buchanan, vol 3 trans J.Millar, London: Williams&Norgate, vol 2 p230ff, vol 3 p103ff, Bousset: *Kyrios*, p420ff.

¹⁰⁹ Zizioulas: 'Human Capacity', p440.

¹¹⁰ Spence: 'Christ's Humanity' in *Persons, Divine and Human*, p97.

¹¹¹ Bousset: *Kyrios*, p423.

Irenaeus θεοποίησις brings to final fruition the miracle conceived in the virgin's womb. The Son of God became the Son of man, that the sons of man might become the sons of God. This is not to deny our creaturehood. Rather, it is to place our perfected Adamic life in the eschatological trajectory of ongoing progression and advancement. It is to see the logical outworking of a doctrine of adoption whereby the Spirit unites us to the only-begotten Son, that we too in joyful Sabbath-rest might cry in delight 'Abba, Father', within a perfected creation which will eternally declare the faithfulness of the triune God.

CONCLUSION

It might have been possible, we could say, before Christ rose from the dead, for someone to wonder whether creation was a lost cause.
(O'Donovan)¹

Our study of Christological eschatology in Irenaeus perspective has considered a broad array of different theological issues. The intention, against the Gnostic tendency to disjointed thought, has been to reveal how all these issues orbit around the broader theological concern of the relationship between creation and redemption. From the very outset we noticed how the movement between ἀρχή and τέλος, origin and destiny, forms the heart of the gospel. It is the dynamic between creation and redemption that shapes the Christian hope.

We suggested too how there is a recurring tendency in some contemporary theology either to conflate creation into redemption (characterized we might say by the hope of 'Eden restored'), or on the other hand so to rupture one from the other that the Christian future comes to be viewed in a manner comprehensively detached from the original world. Either way, a fruitful interplay between creation and redemption, the evolutionary maturation of the project, is effectively denied. If we are to trace this disjuncture within the annals of church history, we find its extreme articulation in the cluster of ideas we have called 'Gnosticism', in which the material and spiritual, this world and the next, secular and sacred, forever persist as mismatched spheres of existence. Once redemption is conceived as a spiritual deity liberating his own *from* the clutches of an inferior counterpart, creation and redemption, domains of different gods, are literally worlds apart.

If Gnosticism is the peculiarly extreme historical expression of this contemporary tendency, we would do well to heed Irenaeus' refutation of the ancient heresy, allowing the bishop to challenge some of the Gnostic-like tendencies of our own Church. For the second century Patristic theologian proved particularly accomplished, both to discern what he perceived to be the venomous impact of Gnosticism upon the early Church, and to disclose its teaching as the fundamental *denial* of Christian hope. And if this description of Gnosticism as archetypal heresy is remotely accurate, then his own refutation must have peculiar contemporary application, at a time when Gnostic premises pervade much popular theology. At one level of course *Against Heresies* exposes the falsehoods of a second-century sect called Valentinianism. Yet Irenaeus does not choose his title *Against Heresies* without purpose. To understand the claim of *archetypal* heresy, we must allow Irenaeus to lead us to the premises under-girding Gnostic theology, that we might better perceive the prevalence of such thought in our own day.

¹ O'Donovan: *Resurrection*, p14.

It would appear that the Irenaeus image of a many-headed Gnostic hydra is not easily destroyed, even with regular decapitation.

It is however rather difficult to speak of a Gnostic 'movement' per se. That is why the hydra is a particularly astute choice of image on the part of Lyon's bishop. Gnosticism after all was a disparate juxtaposition of metaphysical themes, a vast syncretistic compilation, commingling elements of Greek intellectualism, Jewish tradition and Eastern mysticism. Yet the many strands interweave to form a body of teaching with meaningful coherence. The common Gnostic premise, expressed by Lee, is the need 'to remove from God...the stigma of Creation'.² For at the heart of Gnostic systems was a monist deity, stretched out from the heavens to the earth in a descending ontological chain. Instability within this emanation process ultimately produces this present place of tears, as Gnostics attempt to abscond the spiritual deity from any responsibility for this evil earthly creation. Left with no *inherent* value, the earth acts simply as the deformed allegorical imitation of spiritual truth. The earthly exists only as *defection* of the heavenly, the temporal of the eternal, the finite of the infinite. In such a place, humanity comprised of composite irreconcilable elements becomes the battleground for diverse spiritual forces. It is a chilling world characterized by a hierarchical chain of reality, the inherent evil of matter and a yearning to return to invisible eternal forms far from the earth. The saviour becomes a docetic figure, with no real connection to humanity, his corporeal appearance acting only to deceive. Salvation is simply the *disentangling* of matter, soul and spirit, a re-segregation of substances to their original place. The material must necessarily perish, whilst the spiritual cannot undergo perishability. The chasm between substances is never overcome.

If we are to apprehend the way Gnosticism functions as *archetypal* heresy, it is precisely in its denial of creation's goodness as a project which incorporates both the heavens *and* the earth. In attempts to explain the origins of evil, Gnosticism knows no way to distinguish the doctrine of creation from that of the fall. It offers only an essentially monist ontology, characterized by disregard for the material and historical, generating in turn a docetic redemption. And these characteristics are eminently repeatable, leaving Gunton right to say that 'Gnosticism is not only an ancient heresy but remains the alternative to the Christian doctrine of creation in all areas'.³ Wolters too discerns the Gnostic error in common complaints surrounding questions of suffering, 'there seems to be an ingrained Gnostic streak in human thinking, a streak that causes people to blame some aspect of God's handiwork for the ills and woes of the world we live in'.⁴ Through such a lens, the goodness of matter and history will be regularly denied. Redeemer figures will require docetic formulation. Salvation will mean escape from corporeality. This monist premise, forbidding affirmation of the goodness of the heavens *and* the earth, taints all

² Lee: *Gnostics*, p9.

³ Gunton: *Triune Creator*, p227.

⁴ Wolters: *Creation*, p51.

other symptoms of the Gnostic disease. Within such a framework, it is no surprise that the deity must be carefully disengaged from a cosmos defined as evil, leaving the spiritual being fundamentally incomprehensible and inaccessible, self-consciously distanced from all that pertains to life on earth. Secondly, this unremitting monism can only ever construe diversity as a menace not a kindness, an expression of added conflict and disorder, of further disintegration from the one Source. Thirdly, by originating in spiritual fall the earthly creation is denied *inherent* worth. It serves only as cosmic mirror, partially reflecting, partially distorting heavenly reality, ensuring that no meaningful event happens on earth at all. And perhaps most significantly, the movement forbids any transformation of substance, since material psychic and spiritual own different beginnings. In eschatological terms, there can be no scope for salvation of the flesh, no possibility of progression by means of cosmic transformation.

Such Gnosticism, we have seen, is not just an elaborate ancient collection of teachings trickling corrosively into the life of the Early Church. The Irenaeus charge of archetypal heresy proves less exaggerated than might first appear. To borrow the bishop's illustration, one must acknowledge the Gnostic preference for crafty dress, if we are to appreciate the subtleties of its many disguises. Lee is right to conclude his survey of the contemporary church with the following words,

Error indeed is never set forth in its naked deformity, lest being thus exposed, it should at once be detected. But it is craftily decked out in an attractive dress, so as, by its outward form, to make it appear to the inexperienced...more true than the truth itself.⁵

We therefore explored the subtle influence of Gnostic thought upon certain aspects of historical theology, such as the dualistic divisions introduced between heavens and earth, time and eternity and soul and body. Amongst respected theologians, the heavens overshadow material creation in origin, purpose and future. Similarly eternity belongs to the heavens as the place of changelessness and stability, whilst temporal succession describes an earth shackled to transience and decay. This finds anthropological counterpart in the segregation of soul from body, whereby the soul mirrors heavenly reality whilst the body pertains to the earth. Two-stage models of creation in Origen and Augustine present heavenly forms as fashioned from eternity, whilst matter receives only temporal beginning. The material proves a suspect vehicle for communicating Divine knowledge, as revelation meets us *beyond* corporeal existence. Consequently, medieval scholasticism tended to conceive of God *apart* from His temporal manifestation in the historical economy, bringing a theological detachment which would later reinforce the Enlightenment's epistemological dualism, whereby a deist god was distanced from the sustaining of creation. As for the question of time, eternity was sometimes viewed as Platonic time-lessness rather than as the fullness of time, setting earth against heaven, transient against permanent, rather than locating both time and space within a creation upheld by and in

⁵ Lee: *Gnostics*, p283.

the triune life of God. Augustine's time, *necessarily* describing a disordered world, becomes itself unredeemable, leaving a static conception of the Church with little anticipated eschatology and an essentially dualistic presentation of the future as the timeless hope of heaven. Similarly, the hierarchical distinction in anthropology feeds a tradition whereby the human soul constitutes the *imago Dei* as the locus of truth over against the dispensable bodily dimensions of life, giving rise to a non-relational individualist conception of personhood strongly characteristic of the Western tradition. In such diverse ways, Gnostic themes have clouded the thought of respected theologians.

What is more, if the Gnostic mindset tends always to bring the segregation of creation and redemption, it is relatively easy to detect the hydra's presence within the present-day Church, whenever faith is conceived only in a *Redeemer*-Christ, who offers escape from this 'fleshly' world. If Gnosticism introduced asceticism to historical Christianity, it brought an other-worldly tendency present today whenever the Church freely withdraws from society. Moreover Gnosticism's disparagement of the body, fuelling in turn Corinthian libertinism, is echoed each time the modern Church disengages bodily conduct from personal spirituality, introducing false divisions between private conduct and public ministry.⁶

Indeed if the Church at times all too willingly mirrors the ethics of the world, it is no surprise to find Gnostic traits within broader culture, as in the West's increasingly Manichean denial of the intrinsic goodness of creation. Nature is presented as a violent power unleashed in poisoned hostility against us, a Gnostic world empty and hostile to human life. Aspiring to a timeless reality beyond this troubled order, we conceive of redemption as an escape-hatch from all that is earthly and temporal, a Buddhist-like disengagement from all that belongs to this problematic environment. We also noted the prevalence of a certain determinism, which echoes Gnosticism's own fatalistic streak. Astrology, horoscopes and New Age mysticism chain our future to destiny and fate. Personal conduct is literally bound to genetic make-up, introducing a biological fatalism which both excuses and condemns humanity to automated patterns of behaviour, even more restrictive than the Gnostic segregation of spiritual, material and psychic. History too is cheated of real meaning, as time is forbidden its teleological purpose, since there is no future to which we can aspire. We observed too our culture's obsession with the Gnostic devotion to the self. The Delphic call to 'know thyself' is the endless modern mantra, where redemption is redefined as self-acceptance. Revelation is sought by looking *inwards*. A Gnostic-like self-authenticating spirituality is established outside the orthodox creeds, where personal revelation surpasses all other authority. The trend gives rise in the Church to an endless stream of self-proclaimed mediators and prophets, with the inevitable blurring of

⁶ Note as case in point the ordination of the openly homosexual bishop Gene Robinson in the Episcopal Church (2004).

doctrinal refinement. Faith becomes a sacredly privatised matter, a personalized spirituality founded more on immediate experience than biblical study, in a Protean universe where doctrinal reflection is subsumed by a narcissistic individualism.

What is more, we follow Gnostic values whenever we turn the human body into a commodity. Once the body is declared inessential to the real 'me', spirituality is easily redefined without reference to bodily conduct. Sexual promiscuity need not endanger the authenticity of faith. Our person seems no longer conditioned by gender, in a contemporary blurring of sexual distinctions that simply recalls the Gnostic yearning for an original a-sexual humanity. Whether we neglect, indulge, pamper or abuse the body, we assume the Gnostic lie that claims no impact upon the real 'me'. Moreover our culture repeats the Gnostic refusal to contemplate eschatological progression, or meaningful τέλος, either for ourselves or for the cosmos. There is no resurrection to a spiritual body. Corporeal existence is denied a future, in what is a return to Gnostic negation of the flesh. Modern eschatology preaches matter's eventual destruction, in a bleak scientific vision positing inescapable coming annihilation. There is no permanent evolution of substance, no possible eschatological transformation, only the final destruction of matter. In such ways, amongst many others, Gnostic thought pervades contemporary life.

To all these Gnosticizing tendencies in both Church and world, we have studied Irenaeus' effective counter. For what this Patristic theologian so clearly understood is that redemption could never be *dissevered* from creation (as was the Gnostic trend), but neither could it be *dissolved* into the first order further down the time-line, lest one conflate eschatology with protology, τέλος with ἀρχή. The interplay between creation and redemption, far from being cyclical, must involve *transformation*. Moreover at the project's heart is one connecting point of reference: Jesus Christ the Word of God. It is *Christ* the Divine Agent who mediates both creation and redemption, since the goodness of the whole created order, past present and future, rests upon Him. He defines the covenant with humanity and the cosmos,

Particularity and universality, transcendence and immanence, life and death – indeed, all the classical antitheses that characterize the extremities of human nature, including the contingent relation between the Creator and the created – are now recast according to the definitive relationship given us in the God-man, Jesus Christ.⁷

What the bishop argues so lucidly, against the Gnosticism of past and present, is that the project of creation resides in a Creator who comes to and becomes one of His own. In Gunton's words,

Any treatment of Christ and creation, however fragmentary...must end with the affirmation that the One through Whom the universe came to be, the Word of power by

⁷ Loder/Neidhardt: *Knight's Move*, p197.

Whom it is upheld, is also the One by Whom the last Word will be said, as He hands over the Kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all.⁸

Once chapter one of our study explored Gnosticism as archetypal heresy, chapter two introduced Irenaeus' account of the triune God as a Creator who gives purpose and direction to creation. It is He who freely commissions the project, who guarantees the goodness of both matter and form, who directly mediates creation by means of the Son and Spirit, establishing a panentheist relation of Creator/created able to avoid the dual pitfalls of pantheism and deism. The Father never withdraws His two hands, as the ongoing mediation of creation expresses His love for a Son who is His 'Other', who acts as Agent of creation, the basis for the existence of all created reality. Creation must be understood *Christologically*. Moreover Christ as 'Other' of the Father becomes creation's Model, as the cosmos coheres in Him who is its Head and firstborn Heir. He the ἀρχή is both Beginning and Head, the origin and sustenance of a cosmos integrated in Him, as well as the project's τέλος in whom creation finds perfection. And the Spirit is the Source of this eschatological life, disclosing the project as a movement from temporal breath received at Adam's formation to eternal life bestowed by His indwelling Presence, as humanity advances towards Him who is the Image of God, the Spirit-filled King of creation. 'Perfecting' is the call to mature in Him, in a project promising Divine-human fellowship.

Then chapter three examined Irenaeus' account of Incarnation, when Creator becomes created, to begin a new generation by the Spirit. The event does not commence but rather *crowns* the Son's mediation of the Father. For the Son is the Father's Image, whose *eternal* mediation upholds the oneness of the project, since no part of the οἰκονομία is dissevered from Him. Neither does the assumption of σάρξ prove demeaning; Divine life is *most manifest* in flesh. This journey is not one of *external* compulsion but is the love-compelled embrace of creation, as He the Head born of His τύπος assumes the likeness of His *own* eternal life, to render the image like Himself. The incarnate Son begins a new generation from *within* the old order, a new humanity fashioned in the virgin's womb by the creative power of the Spirit upon flesh, initiating the promised communion between the Spirit and man. Advancing in wisdom, the Son renews humanity from within, sanctifying every stage of life on an obedient road perfected at the cross.

Then in our fourth chapter we saw how the Spirit transforms the old creation through the bodily resurrection of Christ the true Man. The Scriptures anticipate His conquest of death, as the Father justifies His Son by the Spirit, declaring Him the One who fulfils Adam's commission to godly rule, becoming through resurrection the Paradigm for the promised world to come. And with His ascension to the Father's right hand the Son completes His circuit, proclaiming not just

⁸ Gunton: *Christ and Creation*, p127.

His *universal* exaltation but also the acceptance of Adamic life into the Presence of the Father. In Christ the resurrected Lord, the Spirit effects the new creation. Chapter five then confirmed Christ as the true Man uniting creation and redemption, as history becomes the necessary journey from τύπος to reality, from distorted to true Image, from Adam to Christ. In Him we may speak of the 'one event' of covenant-as-reconciliation, where a transformed creation forms the Divine intent even despite the tragic fall. The incarnate Son comes to bring blessing upon His *own* land, sending the Spirit to transform His people, in a 'perfecting' that sees not the division but the *commingling* of flesh and Spirit.

In chapter six we observed how all creation awaits the *Christological* event of bodily resurrection. In a barren womb, a grave and now in fallen people, the Spirit of Christ indwells the place of former death, to produce the fruits of new life. For the Church in heaven even the present is Christologically defined, as the 'delayed' resurrection of the Head effects the delayed resurrection of the body. Incarnate souls may retain a continuous history in unbroken fellowship with Christ, but this remains a self-consciously unfulfilled existence, looking ever forward to final resurrection. Furthermore since Irenaeus knows no division between man and cosmos, even the earth awaits redemption through Him whose Kingly dominion secures the resurrection of His people. Final resurrection however is to life and judgement, extending into eternity the bond between אֱלֹהִים and אָדָם.

Chapter seven then explored how the spiritual body constitutes the completed fellowship between spiritual and material. Though Adam's lifeless flesh is powerless to inherit, the Spirit makes us *His* inheritance, in a future somatic resurrection to life marking the transformation of the created order to incorruption. The present body as bare grain upon the earth produces the resurrection plant, as the old life yields to the fruitfulness of the new, in a transformation that is creation's intended movement from ψυχικός to πνευματικός. This future resurrection completes the Spirit's governance over man, as He conforms believers not only to Christ's character but also to His resurrected σῶμα, the Pattern of new creation.

Finally in chapter eight we saw how the intended fellowship between God and man is completed in the new creation. Crucial here is the distinction between creation's 'form' and 'substance'. The σχῆμα of the first order will pass away, but the substance of creation is not annihilated. The hope is truncated whenever creation is restored only to its *original* integrity. Rather it is through His *resurrection body* that Christ reconciles earth and heaven, seen and unseen. True Sabbath-rest, far from offering an immaterial Beatific vision, brings eternal praise of our Creator-Redeemer, rejoicing in human community, ruling a fertile creation, preserving the glories of the nations, and persevering in maturity, with ever-growing love for a God known face to face.

Over the breadth of our study, we have examined many ways in which Irenaeus challenges a contemporary Church rarely able or willing to acknowledge Gnosticizing strands within its popular theology. At a foundational level, the bishop reminds us of the unity of the biblical witness. The deposit of faith means prophets and apostles preach the same Christ, in a public undivided proclamation of one οἰκονομία, unravelled across varied dispensations. In an atomistic culture where critical theology often dismembers the sacred text, Irenaeus insists no part of the οἰκονομία is dissevered from the Son. Scripture's unity is not just the movement from promise to Person, but the progressive revelation of a Son *always* disclosing the unseen Father. Moreover in an age when Christology is often relegated to soteriological concerns, the bishop presents the gospel supremely as the proclamation of Jesus Christ the Creator and Redeemer. The Irenaean doors are firmly shut to any ultimate dualism, because redemption is the πλήρωσις of the original creation, in Him who is the ἀρχή and τέλος. And He who is creation's origin and goal defines what it means to be human. In the words of Hughes,

We keep on coming back to these fixed points: that the truth about man cannot be isolated from the truth about the Son, that the work of Christ cannot be isolated from the person of Christ, and that redemption cannot be isolated from creation. Our fullness, before as well as since the fall, has always been in Christ.⁹

One reason for the widespread contemporary confusion in anthropology and eschatology is the lack of *Christological* under-girding to the debate. In the main, we have lost this central Irenaean perspective where the glory of Christ finds a common tongue for creation and redemption, captured memorably in the fourfold cross as image of Christ's universal rule, affirmed afresh in His resurrection from death.

Secondly, by reminding us that Christ is the Source of all Divine knowledge, Irenaeus confirms Him as the Revelation of both the Father and true Manhood. As One with the Father He defines 'God', as Other of the Father He defines 'Man'. He is no aeonic expression, a mere *avenue* of revelation alongside alternative religions. With increasing pressure for inter-faith dialogue, the Church must recapture this Irenaean testimony of the *exclusive* revelation of the Son. Furthermore anthropology is anchored not just in the incarnate but also in the *eternal* Christ, since to locate mediation only in the incarnate Christ would be to fall into the Gnostic trap of denying previous knowledge of God. The eternal Son is the Man in whose Image Adam is made. Adam is foreshadow and copy of Him, who later comes of Adam's line to reveal what He eternally was. The challenge is to allow Christ to shape our anthropology in every way.

What therefore underpins Irenaeus' robust Christology is the *eternal* mediation of the Son. It is insufficient to call the *incarnate* One the foundation of creation, as argued by some Irenaean scholars, since this only compromises the Son's mediation before His virgin birth. For the

⁹ Hughes: *True Image*, p246.

Son's eternal mediation not only avoids the Gnostic assertion that the true God could not be known before Christ's coming, it also averts the unnecessary extrapolation of creation from redemption, since the Son as ἀρχή and τέλος unites in His Person the End with the Beginning. The incarnation is rather understood as the progression of what He eternally was, the Son anointed by the Spirit exercising the judgement of the Father, confirming the unity of Divine action across the one covenant. With such perspective, Irenaeus vividly reminds an inconsistently Trinitarian Church that Jesus Christ is active in both testaments, as Member of the God revealed as Scripture's covenant Lord.

What is more, the unity of the οἰκονομία confirms that incarnation is not only a response to Adam's sin, but actually expresses God's original plan. Jesus is no 'Healer of the breach', the Saviour of popular evangelistic preaching. He is rather the promise grounding *all* God's works. Westcott's Irenaeus-like words remain peculiarly prophetic,

If now we endeavour to determine the ultimate cause of the defectiveness of the modern teaching on the Person of Christ of which I have spoken, we shall find it, I believe, most plainly shewn in the prevalent opinion as to the ground of the Incarnation. The Incarnation is commonly made to depend upon the Fall. And the whole tenor of revelation, as I conceive, leads us to regard the Incarnation as inherently involved in the Creation. The first Gospel is not the word of consolation: *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head*, but the word of the Divine counsel, *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...* The Incarnation, in other words, when we use the term in the most general sense, apart from every thought of suffering and humiliation, corresponds with the perfection of man as he was constituted at first, and not merely with the restoration of man who had missed his end.¹⁰

Thirdly, Irenaeus reminds a Church often reticent to preach the incarnation that recapitulation *requires* the Son to assume all aspects of Adamic life. When the Word became flesh, He not only wielded a human body as instrument, He assumed in entirety the life of Adam. Recapitulation proclaims Christ as Son of *Adam*, the Man born *ex Maria*. The antithesis between both men bears fruit in light of the parallel; Christ can begin a new humanity only as legitimate offspring of His copy. Similarly, Calvary secures atonement, because the One crucified is Adam's Offspring. Recapitulation broadens our perspective on Christ's ministry, integrating incarnation and cross. So too the ascension seals Christ's *eternal* Priesthood, precisely because the Son received by the Father will never cease to be the Son of Adam. The Church cannot relegate the incarnation to seasonal sermons.

Fourthly, Irenaeus expounds the necessary link between creation and redemption by presenting the new life as one that emerges from the old. The important points of transition, however neglected, are at incarnation and resurrection. In Torrance's words, 'the incarnation and the resurrection together form the basic framework in the interaction of God with mankind in space

¹⁰ Westcott: *Christus*, p103-4.

and time, within which the whole Gospel is to be interpreted and understood'.¹¹ The new life, inaugurated as the Spirit overshadows the virgin's womb, finds its glorious anticipatory end in Christ's resurrection from the dead. Resurrection is not conceived as heavenly imposition upon a Newtonian-like universe following constant laws, but as the refashioning of Adam's original formation, restoring to fullness a broken creation. As in the virgin's womb, so in the virgin grave, it is the Spirit as Perfecting Cause who transforms the place of former death into one of eschatological life.

Fifthly, the Irenaean vision brings inherent *dynamism* to the project. The movement is ever forward, as the delay preceding the τέλος impacts every aspect of creation. The community of faith presses onward in resurrection hope of her returning Lord, averting static conceptions of an earthly Church in Gnostic-like imitation of heavenly truth. The dead in Christ look ever forwards, crying 'how long?' before the promised resurrection of the body. The vision is relentlessly eschatological, as the project's delay rests in the immeasurable grace of God, who plans with all patience and persistence to perfect humanity into the Image of His Son. Moreover Irenaeus calls upon the Church to formulate a *Trinitarian* conception of creation and redemption. In particular, the bishop perceives the *interdependence* of Son and Spirit in accomplishing the Father's will. The Spirit's dynamic work is always viewed in parallel action to the Son, even if the inherited structures of Western theology post-Irenaeus rarely offer a comprehensive understanding of how Pneumatology and Christology relate to one-another.¹² As Perfecter of life the Spirit equips the Son, empowering Him throughout His obedient ministry and proclaiming Him in resurrection as the eschatological Man. The Spirit perfects creation through the particularity of the Son, conforming the lives of His people into the true Image of God.

Sixthly, we must mention the interdependence Irenaeus perceives between man and environment, אָדָם וְחַוְוָה and אֱלֹהִים וְעוֹלָם. In the background lies Genesis 2:7. The bishop reminds the Church that to destroy the connection between Adam and the cosmos is to stray into Gnostic thinking. It is this connection after all that enables the incarnate Christ as Son of Adam to *model* the future of creation, as the One raised from the dead will one day raise the cosmos from the ashes of Adamic disobedience. The earth will share in the redemption marked by the bodily resurrection of the saints. This conversely is why judgement upon those who refuse the Son will also be corporeal. The bond between man and environment, whether to salvation or judgement, is always preserved. Thus at the heart of Irenaean eschatology is the resurrection of the flesh. Against the many confused notions of 'redemption' skirting around the troublesome dissolution of the body at death, the bishop insists that true redemption *requires* bodily

¹¹ Torrance: *Space, Time, Incarnation*, Preface xi.

¹² Purves: 'Spirit and Imago', p116-17.

resurrection, even as the resurrection of Christ is His own redemption by the Father. This final resurrection will be the eschatological hope of Spirit-filled flesh, fulfilling the Genesis 1:26 promise of conformity to the resurrected Christ, the Image of God. At a time when an eschatologically confused Church rarely preaches bodily conduct, Irenaeus repeats the Pauline assertion that only faith in future resurrection can inspire present godliness. The Christological hope of σῶμα πνευματικόν enables Christ's people to abound in the work of the Lord, knowing their labour is not 'in vain'.

Lastly, we might see Irenaeus' central contribution as the depiction of creation in terms of a project moving ever forwards towards redemption. It is not a protracted journey trekking its way *back* to the beginning, but a maturation and transformation of this present order. The movement from Adam to Christ far surpasses the overturning of anthropological defeat with subsequent victory. The project moves dynamically from first to new order, from good to perfect, from breath to Spirit, from temporal to eternal, from ψυχικός to πνευματικός. Irenaeus instructs the contemporary Church not to convey the gospel hope as putting *back* the clock to life in the garden before man's temptation. Such common readings deny the journey forwards, the seed maturing into the plant, the planned transformation, accomplished by a God ever faithful to His handiwork.

A right relation between creation and redemption comes with the Christ, who mediates both as ἀρχή and τέλος of the project. In Him creation moves not towards an uncertain future but towards a dynamic goal, which averts both the conflation of the two orders and the extrapolation of one from the other. If Priestley is right to say that 'modern thinking gnosticizes salvation, destroying its connection with the creation',¹³ then Irenaeian theology is of paramount importance, avoiding both the liberalism and pietism that leaves the Church prone either to worldliness or withdrawal. Only when Christ receives His central place as Lord of creation and redemption can the Church rightly minister to the world. Otherwise she remains toothless.¹⁴

Against the anti-teleology of hardened scepticism and ecological crisis, the dynamic Irenaeian relation between creation and redemption, first order and last, is of utmost relevance. At its core is the promise that the earth *will* taste redemption, on the Day Christ seals the commingling of flesh and Spirit, by raising His people from the dead. It is then, when He overcomes the present distinction of the heavens and earth, that the τέλος of creation will be finally achieved. For only then will the dwelling of God be fully, gloriously and perfectly with the children of Adam.

Ναί, ἔρχομαι ταχύ. Ἀμήν, ἔρχου κύριε Ἰησοῦ.

¹³ Priestley: 'Irenaeus speaks Swedish', p134.

¹⁴ 'Without the lordship of Christ in the creation as well as in the confines of the pietistic soul, there will be nothing...to enable our most energetic challenge to be anything more than a minor "counter-culture" of some kind that is inevitably formed too much in the image of that against which it reacts', Gibbs: *Creation-Redemption*, p160.

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